



Pulse

The changing face of AIDS in Canada

New Health Canada data indicate that the number of patients diagnosed with AIDS in Canada had reached 16 236 by the end of December 1998. The total included 14 917 male adults, 1130 female adults and 187 children; the sex and/or age of 2 patients was unknown.

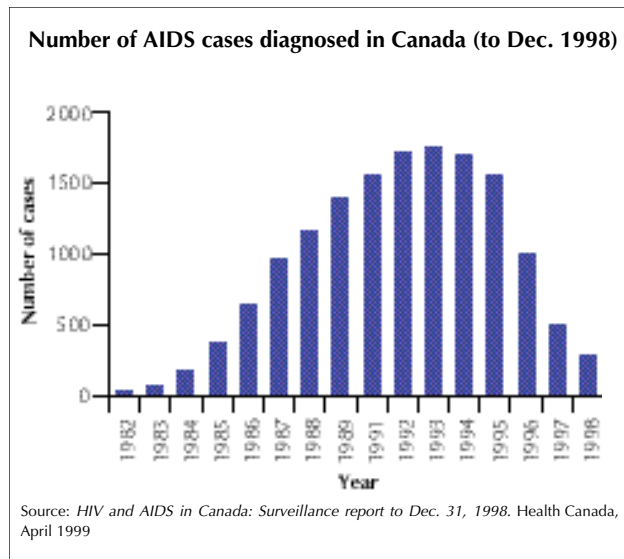
Females diagnosed with AIDS tended to be younger than males. More than one quarter (26%) of females were between 20 and 29 years old, compared with only 15% of

men. In 72% of cases involving males, the men were between 30 and 49 years old; only 52% of females were in this age group.

Adult women accounted for 12.4% of positive HIV tests reported between 1985 and 1998. This number has increased over the years, and in 1998 it represented 21.6% of all positive adult HIV tests in cases in which the person's sex was known.

The proportion of positive HIV reports attributable to heterosexual sex has increased steadily, accounting for 16% of cases in 1998 compared with only 6.2% between 1985 and 1994. Drug users account for an increasingly larger portion of the total number of positive tests, but the number may have peaked at 33.5% in 1997; by 1998 the figure had fallen to 29%. Male homosexuals, who once accounted for 75% of all positive HIV tests (1985-1994), now are responsible for just 36.5% of all positive tests in Canada.

For physicians, the best news is that the number of AIDS cases diagnosed in Canada declined to 279 in 1998, the lowest number since 1984. In the record year, 1993, 1751 cases were diagnosed. (By comparison, it is now estimated that 240 Zimbabweans die every day of AIDS-related causes.)



This column was written by Lynda Buske, Chief, Physician Resources Information Planning, CMA. Readers may send potential research topics to Patrick Sullivan (sullip@cma.ca; 613 731-8610 or 800 663-7336, x2126; fax 613 565-2382).

Military hopes pay hike will keep MDs in uniform

Physicians who agree to remain in the armed forces after completing their initial 4-year stint can look forward to much larger paycheques starting this year. In an attempt to curb the defections to private practice that are leaving the military desperately short of medical officers, the federal government has approved a pay increase that will see captains who stay beyond their initial 4-year commitment earning \$110 000 a year. They currently earn up to \$86 000 a year. The armed forces says a benefits package adds another 23% to the value of the pay package. Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Fla-

man, the physician responsible for recruiting doctors, says the new salary (plus benefits) is designed to match the net income of a family physician or GP who has been in practice for 5 years. Flaman said the new salary is based upon the Canadian average for a fee-for-service physician, using data provided by the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

Medical officers in their first 4 years of service will receive a 7.65% increase, bringing their salary to a

maximum of \$92 000 annually. The other pay increase, designed solely to retain medical officers beyond 4 years, is the second prong in a 2-

Captains to earn \$110 000 annually

pronged exercise. In a separate recruiting effort, the military recently announced an \$80 000 recruiting bonus to attract new doctors into the armed forces.

“We think the pay increase will have an impact,” Flaman said. “Two or 3 doctors said they would stay once they heard about it.”