Youth Mortality due to HIV/AIDS in South Africa, 2006- 2009: An analysis of the levels of mortality using life table techniques

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INTRODUCTION

The total number of persons living with HIV in South Africa increased from an estimated 4.21 million in 2001 to 5.38 million by 2011.Out of the thousands of new HIV infections each year, 58% are to the youth (15- 34 years old).

Approximately 50% of the developing world population consist of youth and children. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for economic and social development.

Challenges facing the youth in South Africa include societal alienation and substance abuse, high rate of teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS vulnerability. The Youth Development Program promotes positive and healthy value systems and endorses social cohesion amongst young people. In doing so the programme aim to alleviate the challenges South African youth face, one such challenge being their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

PURPOSE

In an attempt to assist with reaching this aim, the objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to estimate the levels of HIV/AIDS among youth in South Africa from 2006 to 2009; (2) to examine the extent to which life expectancy can be enhanced if HIV/AIDS was absent in the mortality experience of the country; and (3) to illustrate the number of years of potential life due to the disease among South Africa's youth.

METHODS

- **Study Population:** 15- 34 year olds, both sexes
- **Study Design:** Cross- sectional
- **Data Source:** Death Notification Forms from 2006- 2009
- **Data Analysis:**
  - Frequency distributions
  - Cause-specific mortality rates
  - Cause-deleted life expectancy (to estimate the number of years gained with the elimination of HIV/AIDS from the population)
  - Years of potential life lost (to measure premature deaths in the population – deaths before age 60 are used here)

RESULTS

Percentage distribution of youth HIV/AIDS deaths by sex

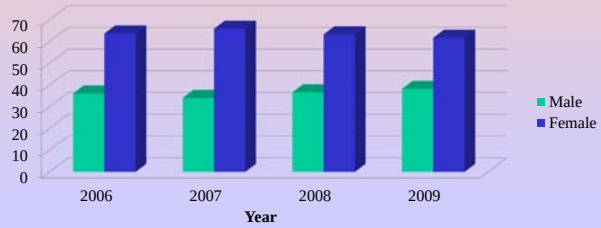
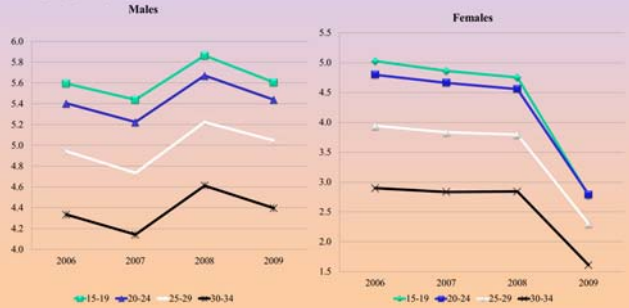


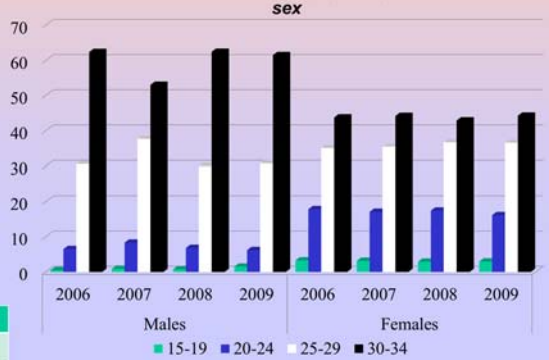
Table 1: Cause- specific mortality rates (per 10,000 population) among youth (15- 34 years old) for deaths from HIV/AIDS.

Age-Group	2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
15- 19	0.05	0.57	0.06	0.51	0.07	0.46	0.18	0.53
20-24	0.66	3.14	0.57	2.82	0.69	2.80	0.75	2.85
25-29	3.21	6.47	2.65	6.12	3.12	6.13	3.81	6.68
30-34	6.93	8.66	3.89	8.12	6.87	7.60	8.02	8.51
Total	2.47	4.42	1.88	4.11	2.39	4.01	2.80	4.36

Years gained in life expectancy with the eradication of HIV/AIDS, by age group and sex



Potential Years of Life Lost (%) by age-group and sex



CONCLUSION

Youth mortality due to HIV/AIDS has remained consistently higher among older youths compared to younger ones.

By sex, mortality due to this cause has also remained consistent over the period, with mortality due to HIV/AIDS being higher among females than males.

Cause- specific mortality rates also reflect the increased mortality of older youth (especially 30- 34 years old) and females within the South African population.

These findings are worrisome and interesting for two reasons:

(1) Since South Africa's national roll-out of Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ARVs) in 2006, mortality among youth populations should be declining and not increasing in later years.

(2) With policy and programmes focussing on the plight of women being affected with HIV/AIDS, female mortality should not be this much higher than male mortality in the population.

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