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HIV numbers at record high in NZ

4:00AM Friday Mar 20, 2009

A record number of people were diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand last year, according to Otago University's Aids Epidemiology Group's latest statistics.

The group said that 184 people were diagnosed with HIV, one more than the previous highest annual number of 183 in 2005.

It said 152 people were infected through sexual contact, including 91 men through sex with other men, and 39 men and 22 women through heterosexual contact.

Two were infected through injecting drugs, two through overseas transfusions, and four children were infected through mother-to-child transmission, three of these infections taking place overseas.

Three people had other means of infection, and for 21 the means were unknown or unreported. A further 43 people were diagnosed with HIV through viral load testing in New Zealand, most of whom had previously been diagnosed overseas.

The group said 48 people were notified with Aids, including 22 men infected through sex with other men, 19 men and five women through heterosexual contact, two through drug use, one through an overseas transfusion, two children infected by their mothers and two unknown or unreported causes.



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The group said the rise in diagnoses by 89 per cent from 2000 to 2006 in New Zealand was similar to an 86 per cent rise in 23 European countries.

The report said safer sex practices, HIV testing and the prevention and treatment of other sexually transmitted diseases were important to reducing the spread of HIV.

The researchers said the reason more heterosexual men than women were diagnosed with HIV in 2008 was unclear, as rates overall had previously been similar.

- NZPA