

FIGURE 1

Proportional increase in country HIV prevalence rates between 1994 and 1997



The AIDS pandemic is raging

by Colin Lowry

The pandemic of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS, continues to spread, ravaging the world's population. In 1998, according to the United Nations AIDS program, 5.8 million people were *newly infected* with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), a 10% increase in infection as compared to 1997. There are now 33.4 million people infected with HIV globally, and at least 2.5 million people died of AIDS last year.

Figure 1 shows the pattern of HIV infection globally, in terms of the proportional increase in HIV in each country, between the years 1994 and 1997, as estimated by the World Health Organization. Russia, India, and other locations in Africa and eastern Europe stand out because of high rates of infection, in addition to Africa.

Part of the menace of HIV is the rate of suffering and spread of other diseases from co-infections, such as tuberculosis. **Figure 2** shows the world pattern of HIV-tuberculosis

co-infection rates in 1997, as estimated by the World Health Organization.

On both maps, the continent of Africa stands out with the most extensive toll from HIV itself and from TB co-infection. Since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in the late 1970s, some 34 million Africans have been infected, and more than 12 million have died, one-quarter of the dead being children. Throughout Africa, half of all new infections occurred in people age 15-25. With infection rates at these high levels, these countries will lose almost an entire generation to the AIDS epidemic by 2010.

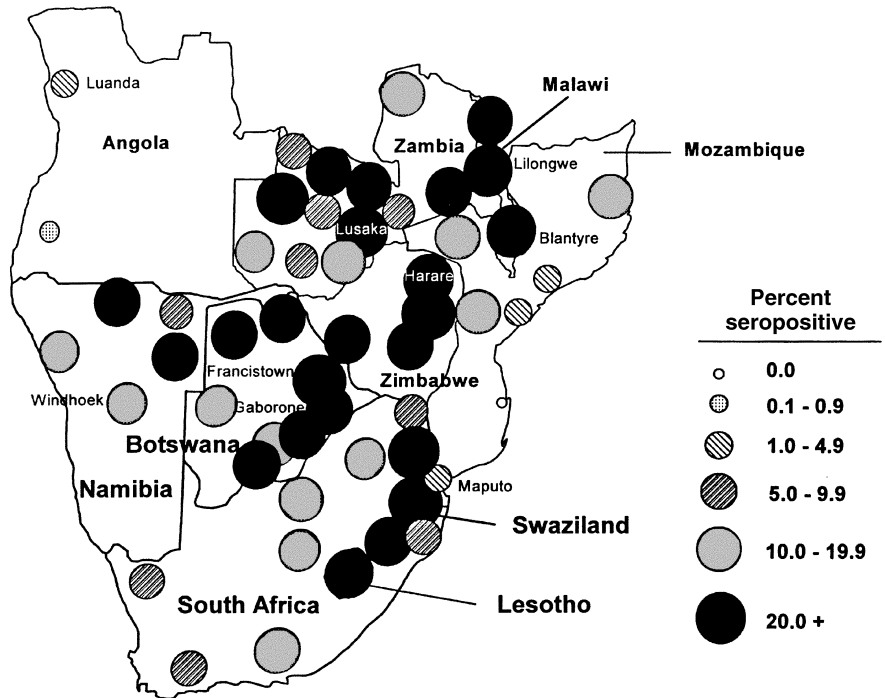
Figure 3 shows a map of southern Africa, with the percentage of seroprevalence of HIV-1 for low-risk populations in various locations. In many places, more than 20% of the population is seropositive! ("Low-risk" refers to people living in ways not considered dangerous or conducive to acquiring or transmitting HIV.)

In 1998, the nine countries with the highest HIV prevalence in the world were in Sub-Saharan Africa. In all of the nine countries of southern Africa shown on the map (outside of Angola), the HIV prevalence is 10% or higher. In Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe, between 20% and 26% of the adult population is infected with HIV.

FIGURE 2
Estimated TB/HIV co-infection rates, 1997



FIGURE 3
Seroprevalence of HIV-1 for low-risk populations in Southern Africa



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.