

AIDS Surveillance, Starting from Go

In order to treat and prevent HIV/AIDS, health officials need to know “who’s infected, what the trends are, where there are increases,” says SPH’s Eve Mokotoff.

Epidemiologist and SPH alumna **Eve Mokotoff**, MPH '81, is the wizard behind the scenes of HIV/AIDS reporting in the state of Michigan and has been for decades. Her two-dozen colleagues at the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) aren't likely to disagree, seeing as how she's taught, mentored, and/or hired many of them.

“I've probably been doing this longer than anyone else in the country at this point,” says Mokotoff, who created the AIDS surveillance program in Michigan in 1986. (“Everybody started with AIDS,” she explains, looking back to the earliest days of the epidemic; Michigan added HIV reporting in 1988.) In addition to being a 26-year MDCH veteran, Mokotoff is an adjunct professor of epidemiology at SPH—a title that recognizes the classes she teaches and students she mentors—as well as an expert consultant to the CDC who travels to Atlanta several times a year and an advisor to other states on HIV reporting. In 2003 she organized HIV surveillance coordinators across the United States into a work group within the national Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.

She's committed to the synergy of surveillance, prevention, and patient care all working together closely. “What surveillance does is tell who's infected, what the trends are, where there are increases,” she explains.

“Over the last six years, we've seen big increases in 13-to-24-year-old black males, mostly MSM [men who have sex with men]. Knowing information such as this can help with outreach. When community-based organizations in the state ask for data, we say, ‘Of course!’ Getting the data to the people doing the work is what it's always been about. We work hard to do that, and we're really proud of it.”

Mokotoff started the AIDS surveillance program for the

state from the Detroit Department of Health in 1986. “About 40 percent of the state's cases have been in Detroit, but the number and proportion of cases have gone down in recent years with declining population in the city,” she says. The majority of the current HIV surveillance staff are still in Detroit, but there are, of course, staff in Lansing as well.

It may very soon be possible to diagnose HIV without labs.

Over the years rules and practices regarding clinic and lab reporting have evolved. The current challenge, Mokotoff says, “is that the lab algorithm is changing, and it may very soon be possible to diagnose HIV without labs. We've always maintained relationships with providers, and will take advantage of that relationship as the lab algorithm changes.” — *Mary Beth Lewis* <

Transmission Patterns

In an effort to slow rates of HIV/AIDS transmission among men who have sex with men (MSM)—the dominant transmission group in Michigan—SPH Professor **James Koopman** is collaborating with epidemiologist **Eve Mokotoff**, MPH '81, and the Michigan Department of Community Health on a new surveillance approach that for the first time lets researchers infer which groups of people are doing the transmitting, rather than which groups are being infected. A pilot project for a national surveillance system, the Michigan system has shown that 75 percent of transmission occurs early in the transmission process, and that teenage MSM with HIV are getting infected by other teenagers rather than by older men. “I personally believe this will turn around the almost two decades of rising or steady HIV incidence in MSM,” Koopman says.



What Makes Young Detroiters Vulnerable?

In a study funded by the Ford Foundation, SPH researchers **Mark Padilla** and **Rachel Snow** are working to identify the social, structural, and behavioral factors that contribute to sexual vulnerability—including HIV and STD risk—among young Detroiters. They're focusing on three specific communities: transgender youth served by the city's Ruth Ellis Center; primarily African-American adolescents and young women—most of whom have a history of transactional sex—served by Alternatives for Girls; and young Latinos in south-west Detroit who are affiliated with the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation.

Social isolation, parental death, poor street lighting, and abandoned houses create an environment that contributes to sexual vulnerability in young people.

The first phase of data collection—life history, semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic observation—is nearly complete, and the research team is beginning to analyze and write up the data. Preliminary findings suggest that social factors, including social isolation and parental death, as well as structural factors, such as poor street lighting and the presence of abandoned houses, create an environment that contributes to sexual vulnerability in young people. <



At Risk: Young Black and Latino Men

Researchers are especially keen to understand the impact of community and city-level influences on this population and are collecting data through an online survey and personal interviews.

HIV/AIDS in the Detroit Metro area is a particular health concern among men who have sex with men. Within this population, young black and Latino men disproportionately account for most new HIV/AIDS infections. **Jose Bauermeister**, assistant professor of health behavior and health education, and colleagues at UM SPH are working with AIDS Partnership Michigan, Detroit Latin@z, the HIV/AIDS Resource Center, and the Ruth Ellis Center to find out why this racial/ethnic inequality exists and to propose long-term, sustainable solutions. Researchers are especially keen to understand the impact of community and city-level influences on this population and are collecting data through an online survey and in-depth personal interviews. They hope their findings will inform policy recommendations aimed at decreasing the risk of HIV infection among black and Latino young men. <



Maternal Health

Through the **UM SPH Center of Excellence in Public Health Workforce Studies**, researchers affiliated with the Maternal and Child Health Community Training Program have spent the past two years enumerating and characterizing the maternal and child health work force serving residents in Detroit, assessing the training needs of that work force, and developing and delivering trainings to meet those needs. The program is supported by the Kresge Foundation and guided by a community advisory board facilitated by City Connect Detroit. The SPH-based Michigan Public Health Training Center provides trainings. <



Lead in the Pipes

Lead poisoning is a chronic public health problem in cities throughout the United States, Detroit among them. Under the direction of **Jerome Nriagu**, professor of environmental health sciences, and **Brian Burt**, professor emeritus of epidemiology, SPH researchers have identified elevated levels of lead in Detroit children. The source? Lead paint, lead dust, and lead pipes, says Nriagu, who notes that 90 percent of Detroit homes have lead pipes. Contamination from lead can stunt both the physical and mental development of kids. But like most other U.S. cities, Detroit lacks the financial means to address the problem. Says Nriagu, “We have not solved the issue of lead poisoning in U.S. children. We need to keep showing that it's a serious issue in urban areas.” <

1977 Michigan Governor William Milliken appoints SPH Dean Richard D. Remington to chair the Michigan Task Force on Medicaid and Health Care Costs. At Milliken's behest, Remington also chairs the State Public Health Advisory Council and the Public Health Statute Revision Committee.

1984 Based in SPH, the UM Kidney Epidemiology and Cost Center carries out epidemiological, clinical, medical-outcomes, public-policy, and economic research relating to End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD), Chronic Kidney Disease, and organ transplantation. It is the leading state-level registry of ESRD patients.

1985 Michigan becomes the third state in the nation to enact a mandatory seat belt law.

1988 Over a five-year period, SPH Professor Noreen Clark tests the Open Airways asthma self-management program in the Detroit Public Schools. Results show a marked success in significantly reducing asthma symptoms and health-care use and in improving school performance. The program is available nationwide.

1991 The UM Air Quality Laboratory undertakes the first of an ongoing series of studies of atmospheric mercury in the Great Lakes region, with the aim of quantifying the atmospheric input of selected contaminants and, where possible, identifying their sources so that corrective measures can be developed and implemented.