

Headline **Sex now chief cause of Ukraine's AIDS epidemic**  
Date **12 Jul 2010**  
MediaTitle **Borneo Post (KK)**  
Section **World**  
Journalist **N/A**  
Frequency **Daily (EM)**  
Circ / Read **83,120 / 166,173**

Language **English**  
Page No **B7**  
Article Size **100 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
Color **Black/white**  
ADValue **576**  
PRValue **1,727**



## Sex now chief cause of Ukraine's AIDS epidemic

**KIEV:** "I am not a drug addict!" insisted Andri, 32, staring desperately at the walls of a clinic for people with HIV in Kiev.

The young father contracted HIV through a casual sexual relationship, like alarming numbers of others in a country where heterosexual transmission has overtaken drug abuse as the main cause of AIDS.

The trend has alarmed researchers, showing that the HIV epidemic in Ukraine has now moved out of the niche of intravenous drug users and into the heterosexual mainstream.

With an HIV prevalence rate of 1.11 per cent among Ukraine's adult population as of 2009, the former Soviet republic is one of the states in Europe worst hit by the epidemic.

For years, the virus has been spread mainly in Ukraine by intravenous drug users but the trend has changed with startling speed.

Since 2008, more Ukrainians have been contracting HIV through heterosexual sex than through drug abuse.

In 2009, 43 per cent of Ukrainians infected with HIV caught the virus through heterosexual sex and 35 per cent by drug injection.

Experts have warned

that this means the epidemic risks no longer affecting mainly high-risk groups like drug users, prostitutes and homosexuals but the general population as a whole.

"There are already signs of a generalisation" with the HIV infection rate of pregnant women now standing at more than one percent in some regions, said Svitlana Antonyak, an official from the national HIV clinic.

"Two thirds of cases of sexual transmission are linked to intravenous drug use," said Tetyana Deshko of the Ukrainian branch of the NGO International HIV/AIDS alliance.

She described the typical path of transmission in today's Ukraine: "A drug user who probably does not know he is HIV positive has a relationship with a woman who probably does not know that her partner is a drug user."

Andri was infected with HIV during an adulterous relationship with a former lover who he suspects now is a drug addict.

"I saw the traces of injections on her arms but she said it was because she had just been to hospital," said Andri, who learned of his diagnosis at the start of the year. — Reuters