

Headline
Date
MediaTitle
Section
Journalist
Frequency
Circ / Read

AIDS fight shifts focus
19 Jul 2010
Asia Wall Street Journal
Asian - Pacific News
N/A
Daily
80,750 / 282,625

Language
Page No
Article Size
Color
ADValue
PRValue

English
8
211 cm²
Black/white
29,701
89,104



AIDS fight shifts focus

Treatment costs force re-examination, move toward prevention

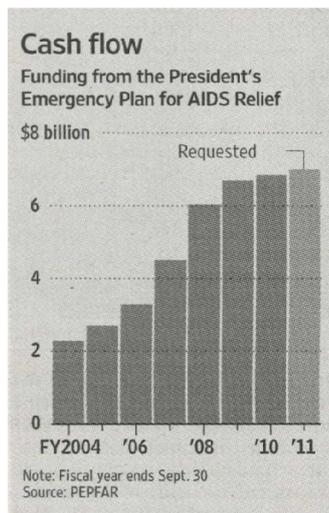
BY **BETSY MCKAY**
AND **ROBERT A. GUTH**

The global fight against HIV and AIDS is moving into a new phase as the cost of treating millions of people is forcing governments and donors to focus more aggressively on the difficult challenge of prevention.

That transition, already contentious, will be the crux of discussions this week in Vienna where government officials, health workers and AIDS-advocacy groups will plan AIDS policy for the coming years.

Over the past seven years, the U.S. government has spent most of \$32.3 billion to put record numbers of AIDS patients world-wide on life-lengthening drugs, along with some other disease efforts. But budget pressures are forcing the Obama administration to slow increases in spending on AIDS and begin reworking a program started by former U.S. President George W. Bush known as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

That program's attention on treatment hasn't slowed the number of new infections world-wide: 2.7 million people contracted the HIV virus in 2008. More than five million people are receiving drugs, and an additional 10 million people need treatment but can't get it, according to UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibe, who is calling for a simplified and less-costly form of treatment.



"We're not going to treat our way out of this problem, so we do have to focus on prevention," Ezekiel Emanuel, senior adviser for health policy to the director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, said in an interview.

Two of the main themes at the conference will be how to cut the cost of treating patients while expanding efforts at preventing its spread, according to attendees.

On Monday, philanthropist Bill Gates will propose goals for re-vamping the delivery of AIDS treatment drugs, because delivery costs

for these programs exceed costs of the drugs themselves. "We need to apply new innovation to get even more out of every dollar of funding that's available," he said.

Mr. Gates will also be among high-profile AIDS donors trying to focus on prevention, a relatively neglected side of the AIDS battle that has historically proved difficult.

Several recent positive developments are sparking optimism that prevention methods can work. Three studies in 2005 and 2006 showed that male circumcision can reduce a man's risk of HIV infection by about 60%.

Health experts in Zimbabwe are expected to detail Tuesday an approach to circumcising larger numbers of men more efficiently by using an assembly line. South African researchers are expected to present the results of a trial of a gel designed to help women prevent HIV infection.

Meantime, results of a Canadian study published online Sunday by the medical journal *Lancet* found that new infections plummeted in parts of Canada as more people went on AIDS drugs, which lowered the amount of virus they had and the chances they would spread it.

For every 100 people with HIV who started taking AIDS drugs, new infections dropped 3% in British Columbia, where the study was done. Results were being presented at the conference.