

How did the U.S and UK government responses to the AIDS crisis differ in the years 1981-1994?

Summary

- During the early AIDS epidemic pervasive homophobia and discrimination hindered governmental responses in the U.S and the UK, despite the more liberal and preventative response of Thatcher's government
- Only in the years 1987-89 did both governments commence major efforts due to societal pressure and exponentially increasing deaths
- Despite the panic of the late 80s, AIDS became sidelined under Bush and Major, once again being left in the hands of activists and researchers



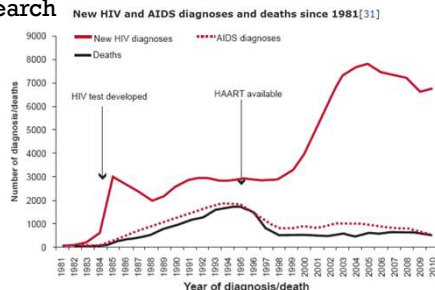
Introduction

- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the most advanced stage of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).
- AIDS weakens the immune system leaving it vulnerable to opportunistic infections
- The sexual and unknown nature of AIDS caused an epidemic and exposed government shortcomings
- As effected populations were mainly homosexuals and drug users, society considered HIV/AIDS a 'dirty' disease

Methods

- 6-week research period
- Focused on primary sources and interviews
- Started breadth of research through Gale archives of Sexuality and Gender which led to in depth research in the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine archives
- Further U.S research collated through National Library of Medicine and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
- Interviewed regional doctors and historical specialists for confirmation of research

Source: Health Protection Agency, Health Protection Report Vol 5 No 22; 6 June 2011

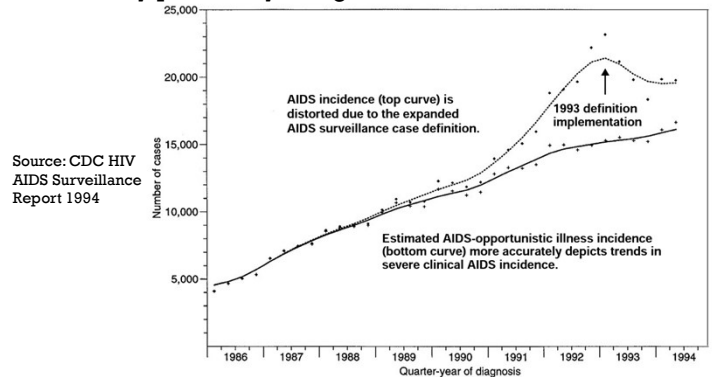


Ronald Reagan

- Marked by 4 years of silence
- 1985 – AIDS addressed after 21 000 U.S deaths
- 1983 – Congress allocates \$12 million for Health and Hyman Services Agencies – met by resistance by ruling Republicans
- 1987 – Reagan's first public speech on AIDS
- 1988 – health Omnibus Programs Extensions Act – authorises almost \$700 million for AIDS public health care, research and education
- Hampered by Helms amendment – prohibits federal funding for HIV/AIDS educational materials that encouraged 'homosexual' activities
- 1988 – U.S adopts HIV as an excludable condition for entering travellers
- Reagan's punitive approach reflected the conservative republican approach to homosexuality and drug abuse

George Bush Senior

- Takes Bush over a year to make a statement on AIDS
- 1990 – Congress enacts Americans with Disabilities Act – prohibits discrimination against those with disabilities (e.g HIV/AIDS)
- 1990 – Congress passes Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency Act – provides \$220.5 million for HIV community-based care
- 1990- Congress enacts Housing for People with AIDS Act of 1991 – grants to states and communities to provide housing assistance to those with AIDS.
- By 1991 over 200,000 Americans were diagnosed with AIDS, (64% have died)
- Bush's presidency and Administration was still one that dealt in homophobia – despite their bills and acts they were mainly pushed by Congress



Source: CDC HIV AIDS Surveillance Report 1994

Margaret Thatcher and John Major

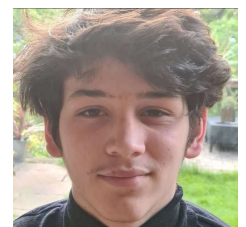
- Like the U.S, marked by silence and distance
- However, NHS had more autonomy for decisions within its system
- NHS works with gay self-help groups (e.g Terrence Higgins Trust) to provide bedside care and any treatment
- 1986 – first Parliamentary Debate on AIDS - £20 million to be made available by government over next 12 months for public education campaign
- 1987 – Nationwide AIDS education campaign – every household gets an AIDS informative leaflet and BBC and ITV host 'AIDS week'
- 1988 – Permanent national funding for needle exchange programmes – focus on preventative measures for drug users
- 1990 - £150 million allocated for NHS AIDS treatments + Social services received £7 million in grants
- However, reports of NHS grants being directed away from AIDS units to other sectors



Source: Anwar Hussein Collection

Acknowledgements

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