



Five children, orphaned by AIDS, walk to school in Fuyang in East China's Anhui province.

PHOTO BY XINHUA

# HIV treatment set for change

By SHAN JUAN in Washington  
shanjian@chinadaily.com.cn

HIV sufferers, considered at risk of transmitting the virus to others, will receive antiretroviral therapy upon testing positive, a senior health official revealed.

Up until now people who were HIV-positive in China only received free ART when their CD4 count — white cells that fight infection — fell below 350 cells per cubic millimeter.

Doctors are being instructed to prescribe the treatment upon diagnosis for patients in high-risk groups, including homosexual men, sex workers and couples where only one partner is infected.

"The new strategy will help prevent sufferers from developing full-blown AIDS," Wu Zunyou, director of the National Center for AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Disease Control and Prevention, said.

"Equally important, it will help reduce the possibility of secondary infections by lowering the viral load of sufferers with early medication," he said during the 2012 International AIDS Conference in Washington.

An international study last year found that a 96 percent reduction in transmission occurred when a HIV-positive partner began ART early.

A similar small-scale pilot program in China, targeting

couples, has shown a 55 percent decrease in transmission among those where the HIV-positive partner was on ART.

"Treatment as prevention is the biggest scientific revolution in HIV/AIDS response since the first antiretroviral drugs became available in 1996," said Elly Katabira, president of the International AIDS Society and the conference's chairwoman.

Wu said that this approach has been integrated into the treatment criteria in China.

Early treatment also helps curb drug resistance, according to Zhao Yan, deputy director of the AIDS treatment and care division of the center.

She said at least 46,000 suf-

ferers on the Chinese mainland will be put on ART this year. Last year, about 45,000 began receiving ART, almost twice that of 2010.

China has an estimated 780,000 HIV sufferers and more than 150,000 are receiving ART, according to the government figures.

"To implement the new strategy, however, requires further scaled-up testing and early detection," Wu said.

More than 80 million HIV screenings were carried out last year, he said, but nearly 28 percent of newly diagnosed cases already had full-blown AIDS.

"That indicated that the HIV testing efforts should be better

targeted, which is why they are being expanded," Zhao said.

Other challenges for implementation, she said, include relatively low awareness among doctors about early treatment, a lack of detailed guidelines to enforce the treatment as prevention strategy, and reluctance among sufferers to receive early ART, citing inconvenience and side effects.

To address the issue, the government will enhance education and strengthen mobilization efforts, particularly among civil societies, she said.

The ART drug regimen will also be optimized, she added, to facilitate and encourage early treatment.

# National campaign targets corruption

By XINHUA

More than 60 officials at the ministerial and provincial levels have been punished for discipline violations since the Party's last national congress.

The high-level officials were among 600,000 people who faced punishment for violating Party and government discipline since the 17th National Congress of Communist Party of China in 2007, according to a statement from the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection on Thursday.

More than 200,000 were turned over to prosecutors for breaches of law, the CCDI statement said.

One of them was former railway minister Liu Zhijun, who was expelled from the CPC after being investigated for corruption in May. His case has been handed over to judicial departments.

Early this month, Liu Zhuozhi, former vice-chairman of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region's government was convicted of taking bribes and sentenced to life in prison.

Jiang Hui, research fellow with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told Xinhua that the country's leadership has paid great attention to anti-corruption campaigns over the past 10 years.

In a keynote speech in July 2011, President Hu Jintao warned that corruption was one of the growing dangers confronting the Party and it has become more important and urgent for the Party to police itself and impose strict discipline on its members.

The CPC started large-scale efforts to curb corruption about two decades ago, and in the past decade, efforts have been stepped up, said Li Xueqin, head

of the CCDI's research division.

CCDI launched several special campaigns targeting problems, such as excessive overseas travel funded by government, bribery in the contracting of construction projects, securities and assets that should be listed in accounts but were not, Li said.

By 2011, the CCDI investigated about 21,000 graft cases after inspecting more than 425,000 government-funded construction projects across the country, and exposed more than 60,000 "small coffers" leading to punishment of more than 10,000 officials.

The Party also quickly responded to cases that drew loud public complaints, such as those related to workplace safety, food safety and pollution incidents, Li said.

Over the past five years, more than 700 officials were punished for their responsibility in workplace accidents.



Great efforts have been made to improve systems to prevent corruption and restrict the power of officials, Li said.

Over the past decade, discipline inspection agencies have begun supervision and inspection of related departments and officials, he said.


Citing the Beijing Olympic Games and Shanghai Expo as examples, he said inspectors were sent to supervise the preparation of the events from the beginning.

"Checking departments and officials in charge of major projects has become a regular form of supervision," Li said. "Such precautionary measures have proved more effective than handing down punishments when damage has been done."

"The battle against corruption will be tough and tedious but with persistent efforts, the future will be bright," Li said.

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