



For a better quality of life with HIV

Like in the previous years, the 12th Polish Meeting of People Living with HIV/AIDS was celebrated near Kościerzyna (the Kaszuby region). The event organized by the association called Polish Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS „SIEĆ PLUS” took place from the 28th of September to the 4th of October. Its motto was „For a better quality of life with HIV”.

More people were eager to attend the meeting than we were able to accommodate. That is why the list of participants was prepared according to the rule of gender equity and place of residence. New participants and people who had just learnt about their infection had a higher priority and were put on the list first. It was crucial for us that the participants derived from all the communities and sexual orientations. We also wanted to give opportunity to people who used to take psychoactive substances and the methadone patients. For the first time, seropositive youngsters participated in the meeting. In total, 80% of the participants were newcomers.

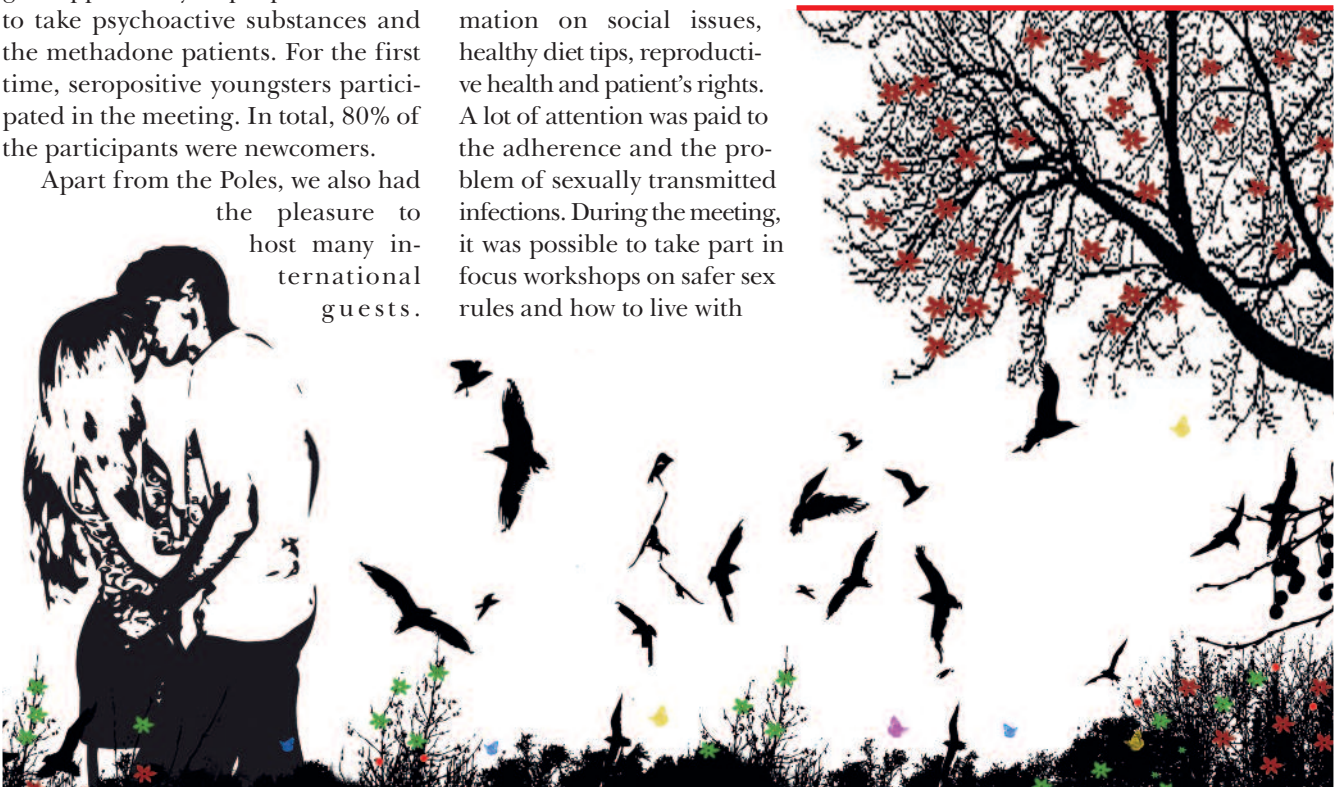
Apart from the Poles, we also had the pleasure to host many international guests.

Those people represented non-governmental HIV/AIDS patients' organizations from the Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Tajikistan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan and Serbia. They shared their experience, achievements and everyday problems during a specially prepared one-day session. Polish participants HIV+ had the opportunity to compare their styles of life with those of other people from abroad. The objective of this five-day meeting was, above all, to increase the knowledge on HIV infection, drug therapies and on the community of PLWHA.

As mentioned above, this year the organizers focused on the participation of people who had just learnt about their serological status or who had never took part in such meetings. Some had the possibility to work with a psychotherapist. Medical lectures were intertwined with information on social issues, healthy diet tips, reproductive health and patient's rights. A lot of attention was paid to the adherence and the problem of sexually transmitted infections. During the meeting, it was possible to take part in focus workshops on safer sex rules and how to live with

HIV aimed to serodiscordant couples, men who have sex with men, women, as well as to people who take methadone. These workshops gave an opportunity to exchange experience between the participants. Individual meetings of newcomers with people who have learnt how to live with the virus formed an important part of the event. New friendships and acquaintances were initiated. The participants came back to their everyday life charged with energy and looking forward to the next meeting. Pleasant memories and the awareness that we are not alone in our life with HIV help us to face the future with more optimism.

Wojciech J. Tomczyński
President of the Association
„SIEĆ PLUS”
Coordinator of Polish Meetings
of PLWHA



UNAIDS Summary of preferred terminology*

Past Terminology	Preferred Terminology
HIV/AIDS; HIV and AIDS	Use the term that is most specific and appropriate in the context. Examples include people living with HIV, HIV prevalence, HIV prevention, HIV testing, HIV-related disease; AIDS diagnosis, children made vulnerable by AIDS, children orphaned by AIDS, the AIDS response, national AIDS programme, AIDS service organization. Both HIV epidemic and AIDS epidemic are acceptable.
AIDS virus	There is no "AIDS virus". The virus associated with AIDS is called the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV. Please note: "virus" in the phrase "HIV virus" is redundant. Use HIV.
AIDS-infected	Avoid the term infected. No one can be infected with AIDS, because it is not an infectious agent. AIDS is a surveillance definition meaning a syndrome of opportunistic infections and diseases that can develop as immunosuppression deepens along the continuum of HIV infection from primary infection to death. Use person living with HIV or HIV-positive person .
AIDS test	There is no test for AIDS. Use HIV or HIV antibody test .
AIDS victim	The word "victim" is disempowering. Use person living with HIV . Use the term AIDS only when referring to a person with a clinical AIDS diagnosis.
AIDS patient	Use the term patient only when referring to a clinical setting. Use: patient with advanced HIV-related illness (or disease) or AIDS-related illness (or disease) .
Risk of AIDS	Use risk of HIV infection ; risk of exposure to HIV .
High(er) risk groups; vulnerable groups	Use key populations at higher risk (both key to the epidemic's dynamics and key to the response). Key populations are distinct from vulnerable populations, which may be subject to societal pressures or social circumstances which may make them more vulnerable to exposure to infections, including HIV.
Commercial sex work	Use sex work or commercial sex or the sale of sexual services .
Prostitute	Use only in respect to juvenile prostitution; otherwise use sex worker .
Intravenous drug user	Use injecting drug user . Drugs may be injected subcutaneously, intramuscularly or intravenously.
Sharing (needles, syringes)	Use using non-sterile injecting equipment if referring to risk of HIV exposure; use using contaminated injecting equipment if the equipment is known to contain HIV or if HIV transmission has occurred.
Fight against AIDS	Use response to AIDS .
Evidence-based	Use evidence-informed .
HIV prevalence rates	Use HIV prevalence . The word "rates" connotes the passage of time and should not be used in most instances.

* Source: UNAIDS' Terminology Guidelines

HIV infections and AIDS cases in Poland, according to NIZP-PZH

July-September 2008

New HIV infections	266
due to intravenous drug use	12
due to risky heterosexual behaviour	4
due to risky homo- and bisexual behaviour	9
other/no data about the way of transmission	241

From the beginning of the epidemic in Poland (1985) until 30th September 2008

People living with HIV/AIDS	11 901
HIV infections due to IDU	5 465
AIDS cases	2 130
Cases of deaths due to HIV/AIDS	940

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Editorial
 Managing Editor – Katarzyna Gajewska
 Deputy Editor – Iwona Klapińska
 Assistant Editor – Maryla Rogalewicz
 English translation – Katarzyna Gajewska
Publisher
 National AIDS Centre

Address
 Samsonowska 1, 02-829 Warsaw,
 Poland
 tel. (+48) 22 331 77 77,
 fax (+48) 22 331 77 76
 e-mail: kontra@ aids.gov.pl
www.aids.gov.pl

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