

AIDS is over (for some): WHO chief

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The head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Kevin de Cock caused some controversy with a recent statement that, apart from African countries, "it is very unlikely there will be a heterosexual epidemic in other countries. Ten years ago a lot of people were saying there would be a generalised epidemic in Asia — this doesn't look likely." An extensive hetero- sexual spread was also unlikely in Russia, he said.

The statement also noted that, "AIDS still remains the leading infectious disease challenge in public health. It is an acute infection but a chronic disease. It is for the very, very long haul. People are backing off, saying it is taking care of itself. It is not." He also spoke of a crisis in the industrialised world where "transmission among men who have sex with men (msm) is not declining and in some places has increased." In the developing world too, he said msm transmission had been neglected and was at higher rates than first thought.

His comments were seized on by conservative reporters (including from The Independent in the UK) as an admission that the UN and WHO had exaggerated the risk of a heterosexual pandemic and spent vast sums of money on people who were not at risk of the [virus](#) [1]A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell. rather than concentrating on high risk groups such as msm, intravenous drug users and sex workers.

Later WHO and [UNAIDS](#) [2]Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS is the main advocate for accelerated, comprehensive and coordinated global action on the epidemic. issued a clarification to refute what they perceived as misinterpretations, particularly by The Independent, on the organisation's position on heterosexual transmission. "Heterosexual transmission continues to drive the epidemic among sex workers, their clients and their clients' partners. In addition prisoners, injecting drug users, as well as men who have sex with men, may also engage in heterosexual relationships . . . AIDS remains the leading infectious disease challenge in global health. To suggest otherwise is irresponsible and misleading."

www.independent.co.uk [3]

- [The global HIV epidemic](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/396>

[3] <http://www.independent.co.uk>