

HIV prevention, treatment, and screening in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, Arkhangelsk region/Russia



Arkhangelsk

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COVID-19 implications for medical care to HIV+ patients

Downtrend in the regular medical follow-up

- Travel restrictions in the region that impacted the patients
- Patients' fears
- Decline in adherence to treatment

Decline in HIV screening coverage

- Reduction in the number of detected patients ("Improvement" of the incidence rate)

Decline of prevention activities capacity

- Reconsideration of the formats and methods of prevention activities with regard to the epidemic situation

Changes in the AIDS Center Routines

I. Outpatient care unit (the unit provides medical care for HIV patients)

- Direct patients' contacts with the AIDS Center were kept to a minimum possible number of visits
- Patients are provided with 3 months **ART** drugs supply
- ART drugs delivery was organized in the region for all HIV patients pertinent to the therapy (the drugs are being dispensed by trusted doctors to the patients' place of residence).
- Employers of the AIDS Center deliver the necessary drugs to designated groups of patients (children, pregnant women, patients with restricted mobility)
- Infectious diseases doctors were trained in Covid-19 associated issues
- Introduction of online tools for **communication** with the patients.
- **Home visits** (blood samples collection, dispensary of ART).

II. Laboratory (HIV diagnostics, monitoring of treatment)

Measures for enhancement of the laboratory potential:

- Renting equipment from other laboratories
- Procurement of equipment
- Automation of processes
- Changes in the laboratory schedule
- Enhancement of employees' motivation (incentive payments)

Changes in the laboratory routine

III. Preventive and anti-epidemic unit (HIV prevention)

- The major part of psychological assistance and counseling has been switched to **online mode** with involvement of social networks, video and audio tools
- When new HIV cases are diagnosed at hospitals, the staff of the AIDS Centre employs online tools to consult hospitals on patient management
- Impact of restrictive measures associated with COVID-19 on **public activities in the area of HIV prevention.**
- The laboratory employees were trained in COVID-19 associated issues.

Initiatives on HIV testing. Mobile testing units

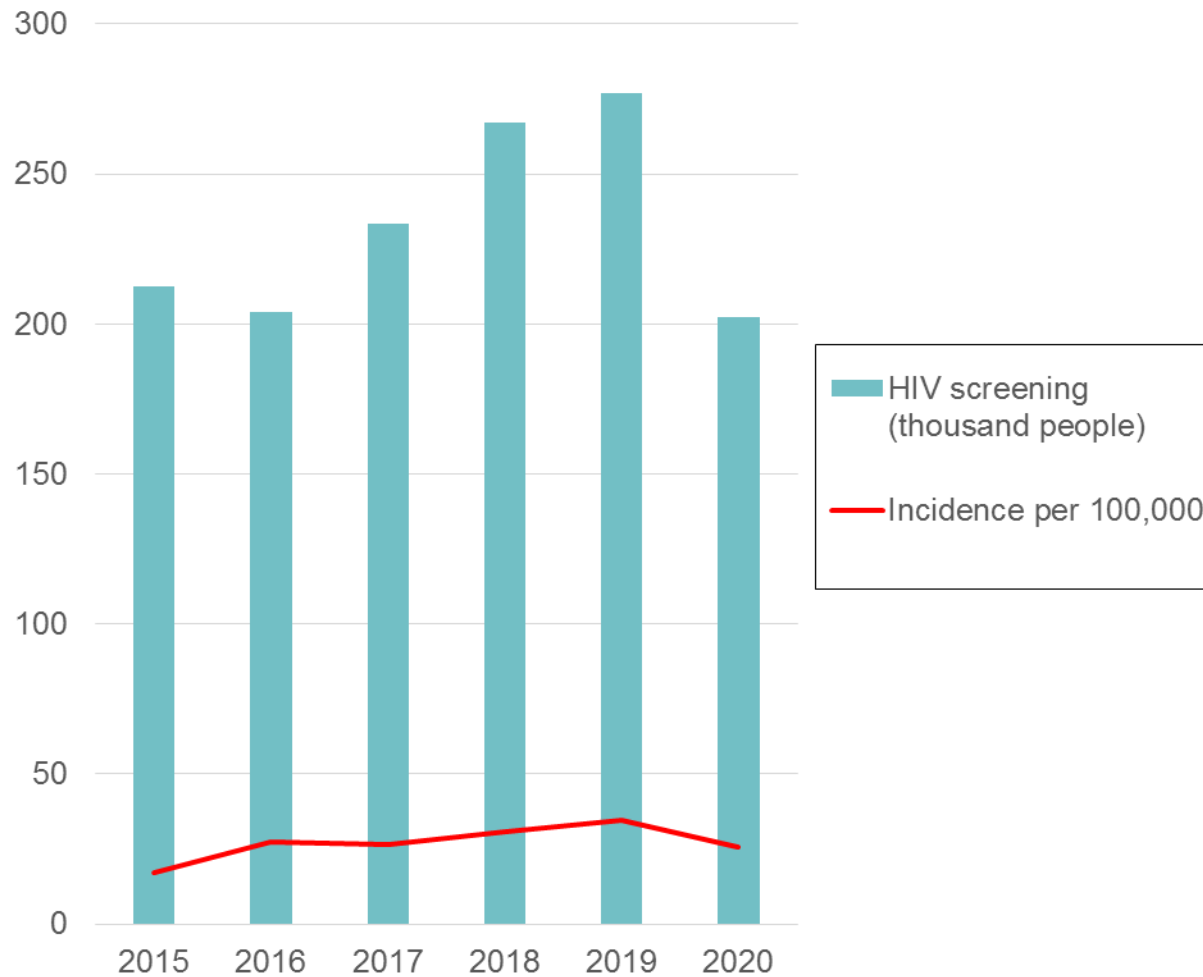


- **Russian national campaign:
«HIV testing: Expedition»
(July 2020)**



- **Local HIV testing campaign:
«Learn your HIV status»
(December 2020)**

HIV screening in 2015-2020



Screening coverage of the population for HIV infection

2015	19,0 %
2016	18,3 %
2017	21,1 %
2018	24,0 %
2019	25,2 %
2020	20,0 % (preliminary)

Conclusions

- **HIV testing campaigns with the use of mobile units have again proved their relevance this year, with being in higher demand mostly in warm time of the year**
- **People are more likely to seek testing when it is done outside any healthcare facility (it helps to overcome so-called “visiting-the-doctor” fear)**
- **HIV testing campaigns are in demand among various segments of the society, including people from risk groups, as well as people of advanced age group**
- **The fact that mass testing campaigns detected no new cases of infection confirms that the prevalence of HIV infection in the region is quite low**
- **Mass media, which has a great potential of attracting people to participation in the prevention and testing initiatives, proved to be one of the most helpful tools, which allows enhancing the awareness of the population of the HIV infection features.**

Thank you for your attention!