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AIDS Case Definition Changes: The Impact in Alaska

On January 1, 1993, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) implemented a new case definition for AIDS -- the 1993 Revised Classification System for HIV Infection and Expanded Surveillance Case Definition for AIDS Among Adolescents and Adults. In addition to the 23 AIDS-defining conditions in the 1987 case definition, the 1993 revision includes all HIV-positive persons who have had:

- CD4+ T-lymphocyte (T-cell) counts below 200 cells/mm³ or with CD4+ T-lymphocytes percentage of total lymphocytes less than 14%; or
- invasive cervical cancer; or
- pulmonary tuberculosis (TB); or
- recurrent pneumonia (two or more episodes within a 12-month period).

The effect of the expanded definition is an increase in the number of reported AIDS cases. Most of the increase under the new definition will be among individuals with severe HIV-related immunosuppression (less than 200 CD4+ T-lymphocytes/mm³ or a CD4+ T-lymphocyte percentage of total lymphocytes of less than 14%). Under the new definition, the date of AIDS diagnosis is retroactive to the earliest qualifying CD4+ test date.¹ For example, an HIV-infected individual will now be diagnosed with AIDS under the new definition if any CD4 T-lymphocyte count was below 200/mm³, even if the test was done prior to implementation of the new case definition. The case is then reported based on the earliest date the case definition is met.

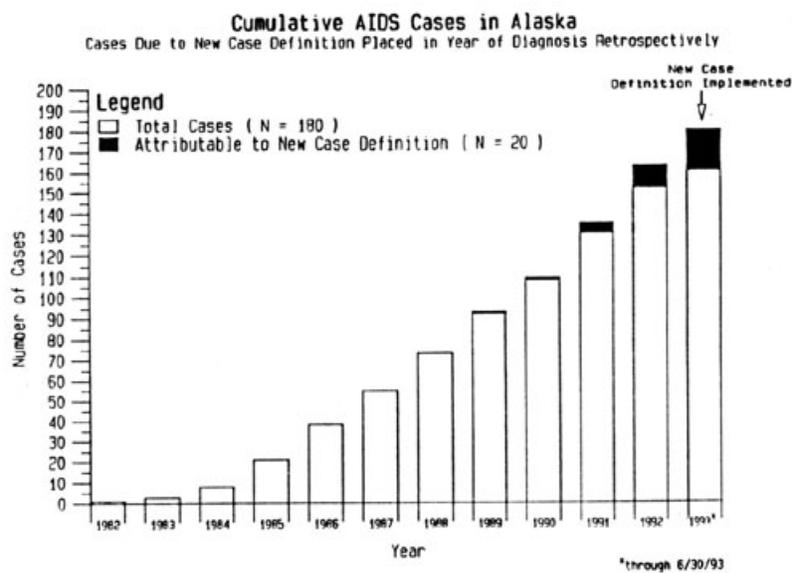
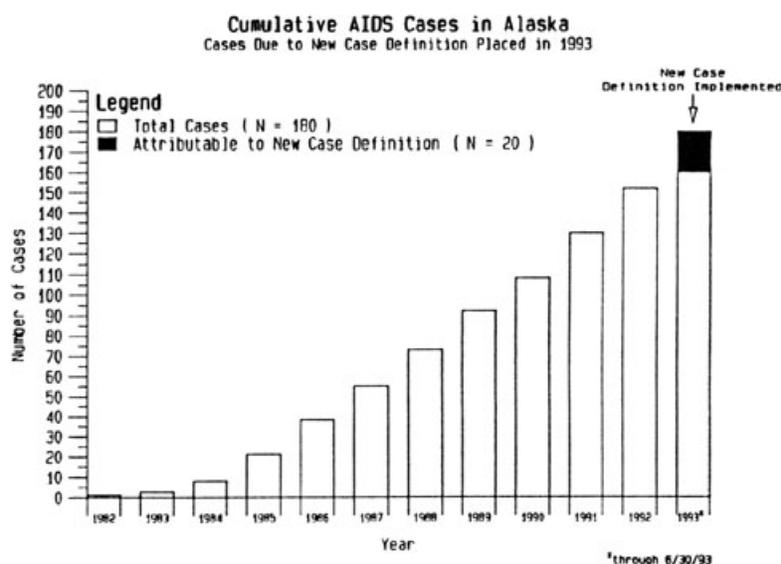


Figure 2. Cases meeting new case definition are all reported in 1993.



In Alaska, the expanded case definition and increased surveillance efforts have contributed to a large increase in the number of AIDS cases reported during the first six months of 1993. During this period, 42 cases were reported, representing a 525% increase over the same period last year. Of the 42 new cases reported, 20 (48%) met the new case definition but would not have been counted under the 1987 case definition. All 20 cases qualifying under the new definition were due to the CD4+ T-lymphocyte criterion.²

Characteristics of Alaska's AIDS cases have remained stable over time. Risk category, area of residence, and race exhibit no new

trends. The number of cases in females, however, has doubled, increasing from 9 to 18 during the first half of 1993.

References:

1. CDC. 1993 Revised Classification System for HIV Infection and Expanded Surveillance Case Definition for AIDS Among Adolescents and Adults. MMWR 1992;41(No. RR-17):1-19.
2. Section of Epidemiology. AIDS - Alaska. Epidemiology Bulletin No. 26, July 26, 1993.

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