



Children **with Health** Impairments

Etiology, Impact,
Educational Implications

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Definition

- Chronic illnesses are defined as conditions that last at least 3 months, require extensive hospitalization or in-home health services, or at the time of diagnosis are likely to do so



Definition



- Rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, leukemia and other malignancies, spina bifida, seizure disorders, neuromuscular diseases, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, HIV/AIDS and other chronic conditions are found most frequently in this population. There are also small but increasing numbers of **children** dependent on specific technologies, such as respirators, and **children** who require procedures, such as tube feeding or bladder catheterization.

Definition



- Recent medical and surgical advances have improved markedly the morbidity and mortality rates of chronically ill children. Increasing numbers of children with many diverse conditions now survive to adulthood and are able to attend school and pursue their educational and social development.³ Children, including those with chronic health conditions, deserve the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential through the benefits of education and health care.

CHRONICALLY ILL CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS



- What most distinguishes chronically ill children and their families is their need for access to coordinated specialized health care services to a degree not required by other children. Individualized attention to their special health needs in school is of critical importance. The illnesses and their treatments frequently lead to greater than usual school absence and may hinder educational progress.⁴ Illness or medications may also limit alertness or diminish physical stamina.

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HIV/AIDS

- Vast numbers of children across the world become infected with HIV every year. Without treatment, thousands die as a result of AIDS. In addition, millions more children who are not infected with HIV are *indirectly* affected by the epidemic, as a result of the death and suffering that AIDS causes in their families and their communities.



Myths

- Despite the severity of this situation, many people still think of AIDS as something that affects adults. Some people occasionally think of 'AIDS babies', and children who have lost one or both of their parents to AIDS – AIDS orphans – are sometimes in the media



Myths contd.



- since HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is commonly transmitted through sex or drug use, people don't really think of it affecting children. It does, though – and millions of children around the world continue to have their lives damaged by HIV.

The number of infected children

- The most direct way for HIV to affect a child is when they themselves are infected. As the facts below demonstrate, staggering numbers of children are affected in this way:



The number of infected children



- At the end of 2006, there were 2.3 million children living with HIV around the world. 1
- Over half a million children became newly infected with HIV in 2006. 2
- Of the 2.9 million people who died of AIDS during 2006, over one in ten were children. Every hour, forty children die as a result of AIDS. 3

The number of infected children

- Around 90% of all children living with HIV acquired the infection from their mothers during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding. Many countries that had previously seen child-survival rates rise, as a result of improved healthcare, are now seeing these rates fall again.



The Problem

- Because every child today is growing up in a world where AIDS is a devastating reality, some people say that every child is affected by the epidemic, whether they are infected or not. Other talk specifically about children who have been orphaned by AIDS or those who are HIV-positive. Regardless of how people look at the situation, it is clear that there are many ways in which a child can be affected by HIV, and that it is not only those who are infected that are suffering as a result of the epidemic.



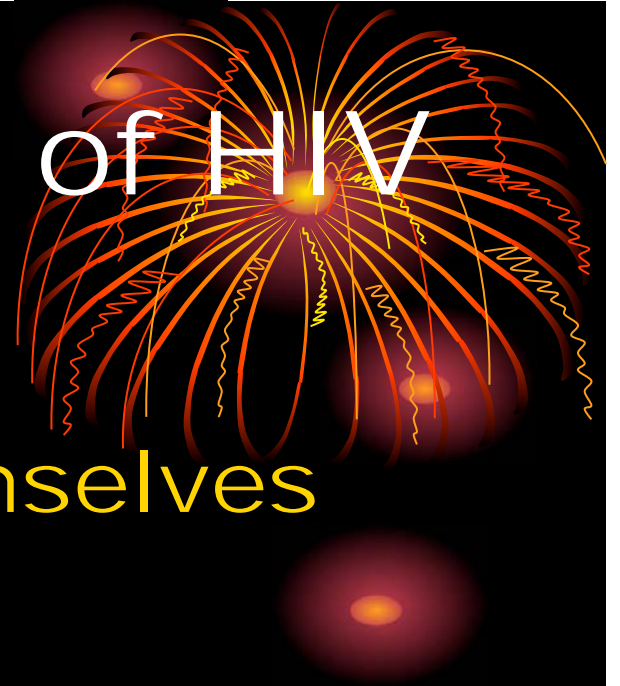
The Problem

- HIV can damage a child's life in three main ways: through its effects directly on the child, on that child's family, and on the community that the child is growing up in.



The direct effects of HIV on children

- Many children are themselves infected with HIV



The effects of HIV on a child's family

- Children live with family members who are infected with HIV.
- Children act as carers for sick parents who have AIDS.
- Many children have lost one or both parents to AIDS, and are orphaned.
- An increasing number of households are headed by children, as AIDS erodes traditional community support systems.
- Children end up being their family's principal wage earners, as AIDS prevents adults from working, and creates expensive medical bills.



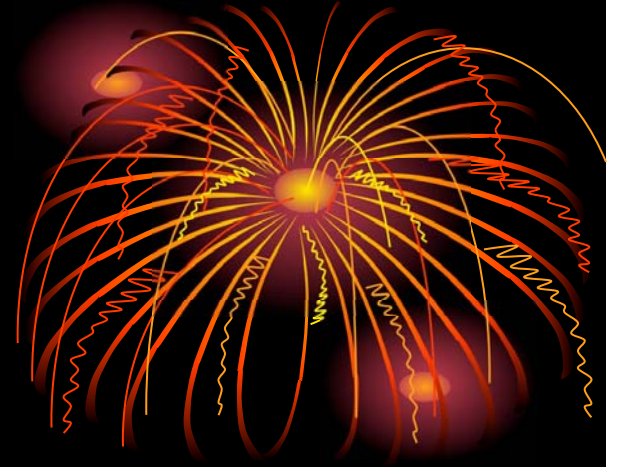
The effects of HIV on a child's community



- As AIDS ravages a community, schools lose teachers and children are unable to access education.
- Doctors and nurses die, and children find it difficult to gain care for childhood diseases.
- Children may lose their friends to AIDS.
- Children who have HIV in their family may be stigmatized and affected by discrimination.

Educational Implications

- Discuss

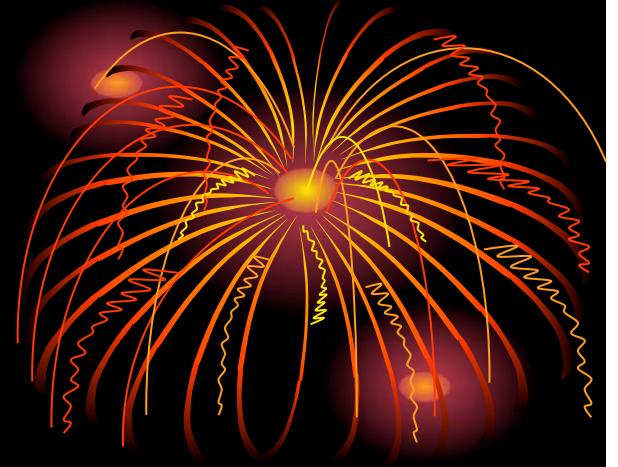


Asthma

- Asthma causes many of school absences in Belize
- Many children must manage their asthma at school with medications or other preventive measures



What is Asthma?

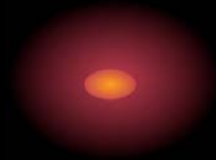


A disease that:

- Is chronic
- Produces recurring episodes of breathing problems
 - Coughing
 - Wheezing
 - Chest tightness
 - Shortness of breath
- Cannot be cured, but can be controlled

What are the Symptoms of Asthma?

- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Tightness in the chest
- Coughing at night or after physical activity; cough that lasts more than a week
- Waking at night with asthma symptoms (a key marker of uncontrolled asthma)



Educational Implications

- What are implications for our classrooms?



Leukemia

- Children with leukemia often experience disruptions in their education due to repeated hospitalizations, side effects from chemotherapy, or generally not feeling well enough to fully participate in daily school life.



Leukemia



- As their health improves and treatment allows, returning to school can be either a relief or a major challenge for children with cancer. For many children, school is a refuge from the world of hospitals and procedures, a place for fun, friendship, and learning.

Leukemia



- Because school is the defining structure of every child's daily life, returning to school signals normalcy; indeed, expectations of school attendance impart a clear and reassuring message that there is a future.

Avoiding communicable diseases



- Communicable diseases can be dangerous for immunosuppressed children. To prevent exposure, parents need to work closely with the school to develop a chicken pox, shingles, and measles outbreak plan. Parents need to be notified immediately if their child has been exposed to chicken pox or shingles

Educational Implications

- What can we do in our schools?

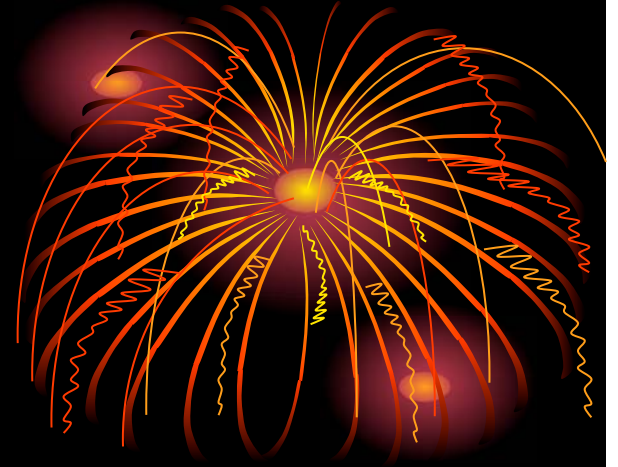


Seizures



- A person having a seizure may abruptly “freeze,” fall and shake violently or simply fall down. Seizures affect about half of all people with cerebral palsy but are usually not harmful.

Seizures



- *Seizure Disorder*, more commonly known as *Epilepsy*, is a neurological condition in which the brain's abnormal electrical activity causes muscular convulsions and altered mental states. Epilepsy is diagnosed when an individual has two or more seizures.

Dealing With School



- Going to school can be stressful for children with epilepsy. They may worry about having a seizure in class or how other students will react. Parents are also anxious. They often worry that their child's teacher may not know how to handle an epileptic seizure, or that their child may be treated unfairly because of epilepsy.

Epilepsy and Learning Disabilities



- Statistically, children with epilepsy are more likely to have learning disabilities than other kids, according to Turk. But that doesn't mean that children with epilepsy are underachievers. Plenty of children with epilepsy are straight-A students. If your child is having problems in school, talk to your doctor about possible reasons.

Epilepsy and Learning Disabilities



- Sometimes, learning disabilities are directly related to the epilepsy. Whatever is causing seizures in the brain may also affect your child's ability to learn.

Epilepsy and Learning Disabilities



- Also, epilepsy medicines might cause side effects that can impair a child's ability to concentrate..

Epilepsy and Learning Disabilities

- depression may be a serious and unrecognized issue for children with epilepsy. Depression is "definitely a problem for young adults with epilepsy"



Stigma

- "Some people don't understand epilepsy. They think it's a mental illness or a kind of retardation," Turk says. "That's obviously not true, but the reaction that children with epilepsy get to their condition can really shape their outcome."



Educational Implications

