

More than 2,000 Indians contract HIV after transfusions

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More than 2,000 Indians contracted HIV over a 17-month period after receiving blood transfusions, data from the national AIDS body showed Wednesday.

In response to a Right to Information request filed by Mumbai-based activist Chetan Kothari, the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) said 2,234 people had been infected between October 2014 and March 2016.

The reply, which was shared with AFP Wednesday, was sent to Kothari last month after he asked for data for that particular time period.

"I wanted to know what is the government doing to ensure people have access to safe blood," Kothari told AFP.

"The data shows blood is not being screened for HIV despite so much awareness."

Access to safe blood is limited, especially in rural areas, because of a lack of proper screening devices, according to NACO's website.

The northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous, topped the list with 361 patients found infected with HIV due to contaminated blood in hospitals, followed by western states of Gujarat and Maharashtra with 292 and 276 respectively.

A total of 264 cases were recorded in the capital New Delhi.

The government estimates that about 2.5 million Indians are living with HIV/AIDS out of a population of 1.25 billion.

A NACO official Wednesday said the data collected was "not scientific" as it was based on subjective responses from patients and reflected less than one percent of total HIV-positive cases.

"There are several occasions when patients do not declare the exact reason or means of transmission because of societal pressure or even lack of awareness and sometimes ignorance," the Times of India newspaper quoted the unnamed official as saying.

"Therefore, the data cannot be considered 100 percent accurate."

In a posting on its website, NACO—which falls under the health ministry—said the government was in the process of improving blood safety screenings and introducing technology to ensure zero HIV transmission.

Under Indian law, hospitals must screen donors and their donated [blood](#) for any kind of infections including HIV, Hepatitis B and C as well as malaria.

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