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## Service Profile: HIV/AIDS & IDU's Education and Counseling Services

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HIV/AIDS & IDU's Education and Counseling Services, Iran

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### Abstract

It is a division of health care system of Iran medical university, located in the capital city of Tehran. This is a population based governmental service, which provides counseling services to high risk and at risk persons, their families. This clinic also provides educational and informational presentations. It currently provides services to local health units, NGOs and other organizations that are committed to participate in HIV control program across the country.

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### Program Description

HIV/AIDS & IDU's Education and Counseling Services is a division of the health care system of Tehran Medical University, Iran. It is a population based governmental service, providing counseling services for high risk and at risk persons, their families and others affected by HIV. This service also provides educational and informational presentations. It currently provides group services for referrals from the health units, non-governmental organizations and other organizations joining the HIV control program operating across the country.

### Philosophy of Service

Our objective is to provide help to those who are adversely affected by HIV/AIDS and IV drug use. We provide services regardless of one's inability to pay for services. We mainly offer individual counseling sessions as well as group sessions that address high risk behavior and imbalances in one's life.

### Profiles of Our Services

Our clinic offers Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) free of cost since 2002. Knowledge of sero-status through VCT can be a motivating force for HIV-positive and -negative people alike to adopt safer drug use and sexual behaviors, which enables sero-positive people to prevent their sexual partners from getting infected and those who test sero-negative to remain negative. This intervention also facilitates access to prevention services for sero-negative people and is a key entry point to care and support services for those who are HIV-infected.

### Service Variety and Treatment Modality

1. Clinical and laboratory<sup>1</sup> assessment of patients
2. Diagnosis, Prophylaxis and treatments for:
  - STD
  - Tuberculosis
  - Opportunistic infections
  - Blood born hepatitis
  - Cancers

5. Hepatitis Vaccination
6. Provision of risk reduction materials: condom, bleach, syringes and needles
7. Methadone Maintenance Therapy
8. Highly Active Anti Retro viral Treatment
9. Vitamins and nutritional supplements
10. Referral services:
  - Specialist services
  - Psychiatric hospital
  - Dental services
  - Inpatients care for infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS
  - Referral to hepatitis specialist
11. Primary prevention activities:
  - a. Education for:
    - Patients and their families
    - High-risk groups (IDUs, prisoners, sex workers, etc.)
    - At risk groups (youth and women)
  - b. Outreach and Public Education via Media
  - c. School Education: Outreach education for students
  - d. Training of student volunteers
  - e. Training programs in counseling skills; and
  - f. Training programs on AIDS home-based care and support
12. Post exposure prophylaxis
13. Linkage with other organizations and agencies:
  - a. Red Crescent
  - b. Welfare organization
  - c. Non Governmental Organizations
14. Peer educations program:
  - a. Group support and counseling to help seropositive people cope with their status
  - b. HIV/AIDS outreach education programs involving people living with HIV/AIDS
15. HIV/AIDS Hotline for risk assessment and referrals.

## Program Evaluations and Research Involvement

We are the only service of this kind in Iran. Our program is one of two existing services, which is known for its "best practice" in HIV/AIDS activities in the Middle East by WHO. People who attend value:

- the anonymity and convenience of the site;
- its cost-free services;
- our supportive health-care personnel;
- youth-friendliness of VCT services<sup>2</sup>;
- being placed within a primary health-care clinic.

**Note 1:** All HIV-positive clients need to be re-screened for WHO staging on a three-monthly basis and also for opportunistic infections.

**Note 2:** The majority of new HIV cases occur among young people aged 15 to 24 through unprotected sexual intercourse, with girls being particularly vulnerable. There are increasing efforts to interest young people in utilizing VCT services. In many cultures, it is socially unacceptable for young people to be sexually active unless they are married. As a consequence, sexually active young people do not openly talk about their experiences with adults, including health workers. They fear that confidentiality might not be maintained in health facilities. In addition, young people tend to seek services only when symptomatic. Health workers' attitudes towards teenage sexuality are sometimes negative and young people perceive them as intimidating. These factors among others, contribute to young people's reluctance to use VCT services.

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