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## Executive summary

Health Council of the Netherlands: AIDS treatment centres. The Hague: Health Council of the Netherlands, 2001; publication no. 2001/06.

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In the present advice to the Minister of Public Health, Welfare and Sports the Health Council reviews a policy paper on AIDS treatment centres. The resulting remarks are also a further specification of elements of the advice on Development of resistance with the use of HIV- inhibiting drugs, that has been delivered by the Council in March of 1998.

- Due to the specialized expertise it requires, the treatment of patients with HIV infection or AIDS must be viewed as a special medical treatment for the purpose of the Special Medical Treatments Act.
  - Within the Netherlands, the treatment of patients with HIV infections or AIDS is concentrated in 21 AIDS treatment centres. In the majority of cases the number of patients treated is sufficient for a high-quality treatment to be possible.
  - Almost three quarters of the patients treated in the Netherlands for HIV infection or AIDS are registered. It is expected that this proportion will increase once the registration backlog has been tackled.
  - The expert professional group, NVAB (Netherlands Association for AIDS Treatment Professionals), has established quality standards for AIDS treatment centres and for those treating AIDS patients.
  - The NVAB issued an up to date treatment protocol for patients with HIV infection or AIDS which was subsequently approved for use.
  - Where permits are issued under section 8 of the Special Medical Treatments Act, the Committee advises using the NVAB's quality standards, especially the number of patients in care as is apparent in the data (to be actualized) from the ATHENA
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project. AIDS treatment centres can be funded on the basis of the number of registered patients in care.

- The setting up of a satellite centre for the treatment of patients with HIV infection or AIDS can take place under the supervision of an AIDS treatment centre with a permit. The AIDS treatment centre concerned must guarantee that the satellite centre adheres to the quality assurance standards for treatment.
  - Children with HIV infection or AIDS should be treated in one of the childrens hospitals where such treatment is currently concentrated. As the number of children with HIV infections is small, treatment should be carried out, as much as possible, in co-operation with the AIDS treatment centre for adults in the same hospital.
  - The committee advises that where a permit is issued to an AIDS treatment centre, the treatment of children should be explicitly stated and a budget for this should be established in accordance with the specific circumstances.
  - The complexity of the associated problems in supporting pregnant women with an HIV infection increasingly requires a highly specialised expertise. It is important that gynaecologists in several centres dedicate themselves to this field of treatment. Initially, the committee has in mind those AIDS treatment centres that are also specialised in the treatment of children.
  - The registration of the treatment of pregnant women and the results of this treatment on the development of the child should be accurately recorded in the ATHENA database.
  - The prophylactic treatment of HIV infection following a needle accident or infective sexual contact would be furthered if AIDS treatment centres providing 'starting packs' -containing the necessary AIDS drugs- to local municipal health centres where decisions regarding preventive treatment are taken. Follow-up treatment and registration should take place at or via an AIDS treatment centre.
  - The registration of treatment for HIV infection or AIDS as in the ATHENA project should be continued in a permanent registration system. The specification of the data to be registered should be adapted so that, if requested, data regarding the disease's epidemiology can be provided, as this is important for the formulation and implementation of policy.
  - It is desirable that everyone who is tested positive for HIV and reports to an AIDS treatment centre is registered in the aforementioned ATHENA database.
  - In view of the modifications advocated in this report, the data set, structure and management of the registration should once again be examined.
  - If the funding of AIDS drugs is through the AIDS treatment centres, it must be borne in mind that hospitals do not possess the necessary structure for this. Both
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this and the setting up of an adequate system for drug monitoring require extra attention.