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## HIV/AIDS-related deaths may increase during pandemic

By: Prensa Latina

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Disruptions in health services due to the Covid-19 pandemic could cause hundreds of thousands of additional deaths from HIV/AIDS, Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, said.

Without mitigation efforts, a six-month discontinuation of antiretroviral therapy would result in sub-Saharan Africa during 2020 and 2021 over 500,000 additional deaths from AIDS-related diseases, including tuberculosis, he added.

In that region, nearly 26 million people are living with HIV and over 16 million take antiretroviral.

But now they can see their treatments interrupted because medical services are closed due to the pandemic or because medicines do not arrive for the interruption of medical supply chains.

Stephane Dujarric echoed a report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS, which highlights the need to make urgent efforts to guarantee the continuity of HIV / AIDS prevention and treatment services in order to avoid deaths and increases in the number of infections in the pandemic.

Many people could continue dying from the healthcare interruption for at least another five years, with an average annual excess of 40% of deaths in that period.