

# HIV patients to get rewards for taking ARVs

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**KAMPALA.** Mildmay Uganda and the United States based RAND Corporation yesterday launched a five-year research study of rewarding people living with HIV who take their antiretroviral drugs consistently.

This is after several HIV treatment studies by Makerere University, Mildmay and the Ministry of Health indicated that people living with HIV were developing drug resistance to first-line regimen as a result of not taking their prescribed drugs.

According to Dr Yvonne Karamagi, the director of medical services, the study is aimed at accessing the impact of drug adherence and its relationship to treatment failure.

## Participants

Dubbed: "Behavioural Economics incentives to Support HIV treatment adherence in sub-Saharan Africa (BEST)," the study will recruit about 330 participants in randomized sample.

"BEST is the first large scale study to test the impact of incentives based on behavioural economics insights for improving antiretroviral treatment (ART) adherence and facilitating viral suppression," Dr Karamagi said yesterday.

Ms Harriet Chemusto, an epidemiologist at Mildmay, said the patients will be rewarded annually based on viral load suppression.

"If we test you and find that your



**Research.** Left to right: The director of Clinical Services, Dr Charles Oloro, Dr Yvonne Karamagi, the director of medical services, and Dr Shaban Mugerwa, the principal medical officer on a laboratory tour at Mildmay Uganda, in Kampala yesterday.

PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

viral load is suppressed we give a reward," Ms Chemusto said, adding the patients will be rewarded with items costing not more than Shs5,000.

## Motivation

She said the prizes are a motivation to encourage people to continue taking ARVs. Ms Chemusto said a small study of rewarding patients had shown a 50 per cent adherence

## RATE

The Director Clinical Services at the Ministry of Health, Dr Charles Oloro indicated that HIV remains a big burden in the country with a prevalence rate of 6 per cent and about 1.3 million people estimated to be living with the virus.

rate. Viral load suppression refers to the reduction of HIV copies in a patient's blood to undetectable level as a result of ART adherence.

The Director Clinical Services at the Ministry of Health, Dr Charles Oloro, who represented State Health minister Sarah Opendi, lauded Mildmay for helping in achieving a 90 per cent viral suppression among its clients.