

HIV infections reduce but hurdles remain

Faithful. Married couples are advised to be faithful to their partners and those who have not yet tested to test in order to know their status.

BY ZUURAH KARUNGI

zkarungi@ug.nationmedia.com

Despite the interventions by both the government and other stakeholders to fight HIV/Aids, many people continue getting infected on a daily basis.

Statistics from Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) indicate that an estimated 1.4 million people are living with HIV/Aids, of which 1,040,000 are enrolled on care and 980,954 are on antiretroviral treatment.

"I blame the spread of HIV/Aids on the way family planning methods are being promoted. People are only advised to avoid pregnancy forgetting other key factors such as Aids and sexually transmitted diseases," Ms Barbra Kemigisa a Ugandan living with HIV/Aids and founder of Pill Power Uganda, a community based organisation says.

She says lack of enough information about HIV/Aids and how to prevent it has seen many Ugandans, especially those in remote areas getting infected.



Voluntary testing is one of the recommended methods of fighting HIV/Aids. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

"Stigma among men who test positive leads them to spread the disease more because they don't want to die alone. Little do they know that the more women they sleep with the more weak they become," Ms Kemigisa says.

She also blames parents who neglect their roles subjecting the children to advice of peers. She notes

that most parents in Uganda don't have enough time to attend and guide their children.

Dr Nelson Musoba, the director general of UAC, says structural drivers such as poverty among families has seen most youths contracting HIV/Aids more especially girls who engage in sex acts to get money.

He says people will continue to

die of HIV/Aids in Uganda unless all the partners put up a spirited fight.

Ms Margaret Tumusiime, a counselor, says infidelity among married couples has also seen the wide spread of HIV/Aids.

Most married people are involved in secret affairs outside marriage hence infecting their

partners. She adds that cross generational sex has also seen many youths infected.

What has been done

This year, President Museveni launched the Fast Track Initiative launched as part of the UNAIDS global 90:90:90 targets. Under this programme, each country is expected to reach at least 90 per cent of its people diagnosed for HIV and that 90 per cent of the diagnosed start treatment and the 90 per cent of those on treatment have their viral load suppressed.

"Over 10 million people tested for HIV at 500 sites providing HIV services. We have registered a decline of new infections countrywide from 7.3 per cent to 6 per cent (85,000 to 52,000 new infections) but in 11 districts in Bugisu, Bukedi and Sedei sub-regions, new infection have increased from 4.1 per cent to 4.4 per cent" said Dr Musoba in a recent interview.

STATISTICS

According to the UAC statistics, more than 1.4 million people are living with HIV/Aids, more than 1.1 million have tested positive.