

Partners abandoning condoms after three months, says survey

JINJA

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A survey conducted by the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) indicates that most sexual partners abandon using of condoms after just three months into relationships.

These couples are advancing to unprotected sex without knowing each other's status, Dr Bernard Kikaire, the HIV NODE co-ordinator at the UVRI, said.

Kikaire said inconsistency in the use of condoms remains the major cause of rising HIV/AIDS infections in the country.

He was speaking during a science café organised by the Health Journalists Network in Uganda (HEJNU) in conjunction with the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC) at the City Hotel in Jinja last week.

The meeting was attended by selected journalists operating within Jinja district who were updated on key HIV prevention interventions including the ongoing clinical studies on HIV tools.

"There has to be consistent condom use," Kikaire told journalists.

He said couples feel they do not need condoms anymore as they get closer to each other.

"As journalists, you have to create more awareness about HIV/AIDS. Much as the prevalence has gone down, the possible threats of going up are there," Kikaire said.

Whereas the national HIV prevalence stands at 6.5%, Kikaire said Busoga region stands at 4.7%.

Edmund Tayebwakushaba, the programme manager of The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO) Jinja branch, blamed the media for promoting herbalists.

He said people living with HIV/AIDS had abandoned taking antiretroviral (ARVs) drugs while others take ARVs alongside herbal medicine commonly known as *kadomola*.

He said the mixture undermines the outlined guidelines on the prevention and control of the HIV/AIDS.

He also said the mixture poses a great danger to human lives because such herbs are not medically tested and proven.

He said most men do not know their status, yet they spread HIV four times more than women.

Patricia Magoba from the AIDS Orphan Trust (AOET), an NGO that supports children and the community members in Jinja, said they conduct outreaches in trading centres targeting men.

Evelyn Lirri, a member of HEJNU, said the café was aimed at increasing journalists' understanding and knowledge of HIV/AIDS matters so as to help them report better and accurately.