

PRESS RELEASE

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HIV AWARENESS -ARE WE FINALLY LEAVING THE DARKNESS OF UNCERTAINTY?

"A chilling direct result of domestic violence is linked to the rising statistics of abused women that contract HIV" says Kelly Hatfield -POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse)

Kelly reminds us that 25 November marks the start of International Day of No Violence against Women , followed by 16 days of Activism but what could be worse than the estimated 35 million people infected with HIV?.....

The rest of the population that does not know their status! No cure yet exists. Until such day as a cure for HIV/AIDS is developed, the greatest hope for combating this modern day plague is early detection, leading to treatment, counseling and lifestyle changes.

"Expand access to prevention tools, use prevention resources more strategically" were all the recommendations at the World Aids Convention in Durban during July 2000.

How many people are in fact going ahead with testing?

Most of the tests available cannot eliminate the six month or longer window period of infection. (The time during which one could test negative but still be infected with HIV due to the lack of antibodies being produced at the time of testing.)

The purpose includes early detection, assessing intervention and support services, education about living with HIV and avoiding infection of others (-the Domino effect).

"Young people have the right to information about their own HIV status" Nicole Barlow, Coalition for Children's Rights.

The myriad of reasons why people do not go for testing, include the high cost and sustainability of such services, doubts about their effectiveness in reducing psychological stress and in bringing about behavioral change. Key service issues include affordability, privacy, confidentiality and convenience. New testing technology can address issues in terms of lower costs, simple methods and rapid results.

Problems often include cost, blood drawers, lab technicians, admin staff and the cost of test. Invasiveness of drawing large amounts of blood and the fact that confirmed results may take days to be processed by a laboratory, requiring individuals to make a second visit, if in fact, they return at all.

Research shows that if voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) were made more available and more knew about their status, it is likely that the ignorance, fear, stigma, often attached would decrease. Leading to more open approaches, will provide more means to learn of infection, foster individual responsibility and take personal action.

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