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# HIV/AIDS killed over 200 Sarawakians in 20 years

Most cases involve people between 20 and 49 years old

By Adrian Lim

**KUCHING:** Some 204 Sarawakians have died from HIV/AIDS over the last 20 years, not 1,000 annually, said state health director Dr Mohd Kamil Hassan yesterday.

Dr Kamil said this when clarifying Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) Kota Sentosa branch deputy youth chairman Wilfred Yap's claim that more than 1,000 deaths were recorded in Sarawak each year and many more suffered from sexually transmitted diseases.

"That figure given is not right. The statistics that we have here revealed that there are not so many people living with HIV/AIDS dying from the disease yearly," Kamil told a press conference here.

He said for HIV infection, there were 977 cases and for the number of AIDS reported, there were 519 cases from 1989 until April this year.

He added that from the total number of infected people, 732 were males and 245 were females.

He said most of the people who contacted HIV/AIDS were between the age of 20 and 49.

He revealed that in terms of risk category, heterosexuals were the



BRIEFING: Kamil shows the HIV/AIDS statistics during the press conference.

highest.

He explained that last year, there were 137 cases of HIV infections, 91 cases of AIDS which killed 36 persons.

The fatality figure which consisted of 30 males and six females was the highest in the past 15 years.

"As for January until April this year, there were 46 cases of HIV infection, 91 cases of AIDS (of which seven died).

"From the 46 cases, 31 are male and 15 are female," Kamil said.

Kamil also said the State Health Department has embarked on various educational programmes to educate the public about HIV/AIDS.

"Public education and awareness are very important as far as health is concerned.

"We want people to know as much as they can about HIV/AIDS," he said.

That figure given is not right. The statistics that we have here revealed that there are not so many people living with HIV/AIDS dying from the disease yearly.

Dr Mohd Kamil Hassan, state health director

"We have counselling for HIV/AIDS all over the state and we also do some screening of HIV for pre-marriage couple voluntarily.

He said there are also seminars, health programmes that involved teenagers and different outreach programmes involving non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agencies aimed at educating the public about HIV/AIDS.

Yap told reporters on Friday that despite the high death toll, many people remained complacent, thinking that the deadly disease would not affect them and their loved ones.

He said this when announcing the branch's HIV/AIDS Public Awareness Exhibition and Talk at Boulevard Shopping Mall here this afternoon.