

Headline **M'sians still ignorant on spread of HIV**
Date **07 Sep 2009**
MediaTitle **Daily Express**
Section **Nation**
Journalist **N/A**
Frequency **Daily (EM)**
Circ / Read **29,826 / 97,836**

Language **English**
Page No **7**
Article Size **183 cm²**
Color **Black/white**
ADValue **377**
PRValue **1,131**



M'sians still ignorant on spread of HIV

PETALING JAYA: There is still a lot of misconception about the mode of transmission of HIV infection in Malaysia despite various awareness programmes conducted by the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), a survey revealed.

These were related to mainly kissing, sharing meals, sitting on public toilets, using public swimming pools and causal contact, said University of Malaya Psychologist, Prof Low Wah Yun, who conducted the survey with two other colleagues.

"It was important for these misconceptions to be dispelled in order to reduce the stigma and discrimination," she told *Bernama* here.

In this respect she added the mass media could play a significant role where it could tackle difficult issues such as how to handle unwanted sexual advances and negotiate condom use.

Low also said that the number of HIV cases through heterosexual relationship was on the rise in the country due to the fact that most Malaysian males were reluctant to use condoms.

She also highlighted the risk of contacting HIV amongst adolescents who did not practice safe sex.

"Worldwide, more than 50 per cent of all new HIV infections occur in those between 10 and 24 years. Daily, over 7000 young people were infected with HIV," she said.

Low said although the Ministry of Health had implemented the "Prostar" programme for young people aimed at increasing their knowledge on HIV/AIDS, the survey found that there was still a large number of youths who were unaware of it.

She suggested that the programme be widely implemented especially for out of school youths and young factory workers.

She said peer education was an effective way for young people to participate in HIV prevention and care efforts.

On the rising threat of cybersex and internet sex addiction, she said online sexual activity was the next sexual revolution, as it was a type of sexual expression that ranged from curiosity to obsessive involvement.

To combat this growing social issue, there was an urgent need for youth friendly sexual and reproductive health services that provided confidentiality and trust and were non-judgmental, she added. – *Bernama*