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AIDS: New evidence backs circumcision campaign

ROME: A campaign to encourage African men to get circumcised to prevent infection by HIV gained a powerful boost Wednesday by three new studies unveiled at the world AIDS forum in Rome.

New cases of HIV among men fell by an astonishing 76 percent after a circumcision programme was launched in a South African township, researchers reported.

Had no circumcisions been carried out, the tally of new infections among the overall population, men and women combined, would have been 58 percent higher.

“This study is a fantastic result for a simple intervention which costs 40 euros (US\$56), takes 20 minutes and has to be done only once in a lifetime,” said David Lewis, of the Society for Family Health in Johannesburg and the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

In 2006, trials in Kenya, Uganda and South Africa found foreskin removal more than halved men’s risk of infection by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Longer-term analysis found the benefit to be even greater than thought, with a risk reduction of around 60 percent.

After pondering risks and benefits, health watchdogs set in motion circumcision campaigns in 13 sub-Saharan countries that have been badly hit by the AIDS virus.

– AFP