

Headline	More turning up to check for HIV Dept		
MediaTitle	Daily Express (KK)		
Date	23 Nov 2011	Color	Black/white
Section	Nation	Circulation	30,557
Page No	12	Readership	97,836
Language	English	ArticleSize	166 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 342
Frequency	Daily (EM)	PR Value	RM 1,026



More turning up to check for HIV: Dept

Stephanie Lee

KOTA KINABALU: More HIV positive people have been turning up at the doors of the health authorities in Sabah, like everywhere else in the country.

Sabah Health Department Director, Dr Mohd Yusof Ibrahim said to tackle this problem, the government has been encouraging voluntary HIV screening among the people, by providing free anonymous screening sessions in all government clinics.

Two types of screening are conducted, namely the anonymous and voluntary HIV screening and pre-marital screening (which requires a minimal fee).

Statistics on the anonymous screening, he said, showed that the numbers have increased from 963 in 2009 to 1931 in 2010 with two confirmed positive in both years.

As for the statistics up to September this year, a total of 1,962 screenings were carried out with two confirmed positive, he revealed.

On the other hand, Yusof said pre-marital screening increased from 8,132 cases with nine confirmed positive in 2009, to 14,185 with 13 confirmed positive last year.

The department has recorded up to 11,269 pre-marital screenings with 14 confirmed positive as of September this year.

"So we can see that the awareness among the public on the need to have such screenings as well as the services provided by the government is there," he said.

Statistics from the Health Ministry revealed that sexually transmitted diseases are steadily increasing each year as well as

intravenous drug abuse in Malaysia.

In 2010, nearly 50 per cent of new HIV cases involved people infected through these means and over the past year, a total of 3,652 new HIV cases have been reported with a notification rate of 12.8 per 100,000 population.

As a result of the HIV screening programmes, it was found that about 0.06 per cent among pregnant women, 0.07 per cent among couples-to-be and 0.6 per cent among those who underwent voluntary screening were HIV positive.

In this respect, Yusof said the programme is to provide quick, anonymous and confidential HIV screening to the society, apart from encouraging individuals with risks to come forward and undergo the test for early detection. It also provides a service package that covers counseling, treatment and follow-up care for those found HIV positive.

Eligible HIV positive clients will be enrolled into a treatment programme using HAART (Highly Active Anti Retroviral Therapy).

The public health services, through pre-marital HIV screening on the other hand aims to educate couples on safety precautions after marriage and how to minimise risks of spouses or other people contracting the disease.

It is also an effective measure for early detection of HIV for the prevention of mother to child transmission.

On other developments, Yusof pointed out that the National-level World AIDS Day would be held in Sandakan on Dec 10.



Md Yusof