

Headline	New HIV cases drop 50pc within 11 years		
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New HIV cases drop 50pc within 11 years

KUALA LUMPUR: New HIV cases in Malaysia have recorded a drop of over 50 per cent in 11 years, from 6,978 cases reported in 2002 to 3,393 cases last year, said Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S.Subramaniam.

He said new HIV infection among drug addicts, the high-risk group that previously recorded the highest rate of new infections, had also shown a consistent drop.

"This is the outcome of the Reducing Harm programme (Injection tools and needle exchange programme and Methadone Replacement Therapy) being launched simultaneously by the ministry, Malaysian AIDS Council and affiliates in 2006.

"New HIV infection among drug addicts has since then decreased from 53 per cent in 2006 to only 22 per cent last year," he said in his speech at the 12th Malaysian Aids Council biannual meeting, here, Saturday.

His text of speech was read by Health deputy director-general (Public Health) Datuk Dr Lokman Hakim Sulaiman.

Dr Subramaniam said the Government was confident that the Millennium Development Goal of targeting 11 new infections for every 100,000 of the population by 2015 could be achieved.

However, he said, sexual transmission had contributed to over 74 per cent of new cases last year, a drastic rise compared to only 32 per cent, five years ago.

He said sex within the context of HIV was a very sensitive and complex issue to address and, as such, the ministry's health officers should find the best overall way to curb infection via sex.

Those infected with HIV must also be sincere and responsible in not spreading it to their partners, he said. - Bernama