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HIV sex cases rising

But those involving IDU are fewer now

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MORE Malaysians are getting infected with HIV through sexual intercourse than through intravenous drug use (IDU), according to Penang Family Health Development Association's (PFHDA) head of training centre Dr Ilias Yee.

"The number of IDU cases is decreasing because of the government's effective needle exchange and methadone programmes.

"Instead, transmission though sexual intercourse is on the rise," he said in an interview.

He said 78,784 HIV cases were reported in the country between 1986 and June 2007.

Over the same period, there were 13,121 AIDS cases reported and 9,586 AIDS-related deaths.

He said although intravenous drug users formed the biggest category with 59,602 people infected with HIV and 7,395 with AIDS over the same period, the number was dwindling.

He said over the 20-year period, there were a total of 12,396 heterosexual people infected with HIV and 3,829 with AIDS.

According to the Malaysian Aids Council (MAC) website, the group

with the largest number of HIV cases are odd-job workers.

Maycare Centre in Seberang Jaya which was launched two years ago under PFHDA receive 30 to 40 drop-in clients per month.

Its manager Christine Low said the centre provided information, counselling and testing for HIV/AIDS.

The centre also provides baby milk for mothers with HIV who were advised not to breastfeed.

"All the treatment at the centre is free as we receive funds from MAC.

"But the public can still donate in cash or kind," she said.