

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Sharing HIV Status With Partners

Malawi's population of over 14 million is greatly affected by HIV.

According to the UNAIDS 2012 global report, as of 2011 an estimated 910,000 people were living with HIV. HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death among adults in Malawi.

HIV testing, is essential to ensure early access to HIV treatment and related services and the protection of sexual partners who don't have HIV. Testing is also helpful to expectant mothers so that, if needed, they can access services that can reduce the risk of HIV transmission during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

This week, we'll discuss the importance of telling one's HIV status to their partner.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the importance of HIV/AIDS status disclosure
- To help create a positive attitude towards HIV testing
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the importance of HIV/AIDS status disclosure
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The Problem: HIV/AIDS Status Disclosure to Partners

Disclosing one's HIV status to a sex partner can be emotionally difficult, but it is a very important thing to do.

If you are in a relationship, and you find out that you are HIV negative, it important to tell your partner as soon as you know your status.

It is also important to suggest to your partner to get tested for HIV, too.

It is rare for an HIV negative person not to disclose their status to their partners, however, those who have been found to be positive, often find it too hard to disclose their status.

In a random, unscientific study, done with some people in the city of Blantyre, there are various reasons why people don't disclose their HIV status to their sexual partners.

Out of the 16 people that were interviewed, 10 said if they were to disclose their HIV positive status to their partner, then the partner will accuse them of being unfaithful. The six others said their partner might leave them for somebody else.

However, disclosing one's HIV status, allows your partner to engage in preventive behavior, such as using condoms if they are HIV negative.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand the importance of HIV status disclosure.

Make the following points;

Disclosing HIV status to sexual partners can be difficult at times. Some people do not want to disclose their HIV status because they are not sure how their partner or relatives would react to such an issue.

Even though this might be difficult, it is important to disclose your HIV status to your partner, even if you are having protected sex in your relationship.

According to a doctor (who did not want to be named) at one of the private clinics in Blantyre, disclosure may motivate partners to seek testing or reduce risky behavior, and ultimately decrease the transmission of HIV.

Disclosing one's HIV status, could also help the HIV positive person receive necessary support. For instance, their partner could provide emotional and psychological support to help them during stressful moments. Kind words and assurance from partners could help them to quickly accept

their situation.

Telling a partner about one's HIV status is very helpful because one can receive assistance with medical care and they'd be able to take their medications freely without hiding them from their partners. The partner can also help to make sure the person doesn't miss a dosage of their medication.

Have a vox pop with a few people from your area about whether they believe they could disclose to their partners their HIV status regardless of whether they are HIV positive or negative.

Do an interview with an HIV positive person and ask them if they have ever shared their status with their sexual partners. Find out why they did or did not do so.

Interview a nurse from your local health center and find out why some people do not disclose their HIV status to their partners.

Also ask them to talk about why it is important to share such information with their partner.

- Sandra Mapemba -Population Reference Bureau-PRB- Contact person+265-99-921-9789
Dr Linje Manyozo- National Aids Commission-0111745869
Timothy Bonyoga-HIV/AIDS issues expert-+265888652397

