Health-E

Condoms still the best defense

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Lusikisiki - Prevention is everyone's responsibility, whether you are HIV positive or negative. This was the key message of a recent campaign against teenage pregnancy held in Gabajana in the Eastern Cape by the Community Media Trust (CMT - Siyayinqoba Beat It), Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), the local AIDS council and other partners.

There are statistics from the Department of Health indicating that girls between the ages of 14 and 19 are sexually active, but not practicing safe sex. Therefore this campaign was aimed at educating the youth about safe sex practices and other related issues.

"It is not uncommon to see girls as young as 14 years [that are pregnant]," said a Gabajana community member who prefers to remain anonymous. "Peer pressure, low self esteem, poverty and financial dependence on men are some of the reasons so many teens fall pregnant."

The campaign aimed to teach young people about the benefits of always using a condom during sex. It is highly effective (95 percent) in preventing pregnancy and also protects a person from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.

"Condoms are free at any health facility; they have no medical side effects and are only needed when you are actually having sex," said a health care worker at Flagstaff Clinic in the Eastern Cape. "Another option for young girls are also to use abortion as a form of contraception."

The latest research in HIV prevention has shown that using multiple prevention methods are most effective in preventing the transmission of STIs. The campaign stakeholders therefore suggested that people use a number of different prevention methods, including condoms, medical male circumcision and limiting the number of sexual partners to reduce their chances of HIV infection and/or re-infection.

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