

MEDIA RELEASE
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Fight against sugar daddies must continue – KZN Health MEC

The spread of HIV by “sugar daddies” will not go away unless the phenomenon is actively confronted and condemned by all sectors of society. This is the view of KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo.

Addressing delegates at the 36th conference of the South African Association for Campus Health Services (SAACHS) in Umhlanga Ridge yesterday, Dr Dhlomo cited research which showed that girl children appeared to contract HIV much earlier than their male counterparts, due to sexual relations with older men.

“The research showed us that almost all children who are entering school and finishing at grade 7 are HIV negative, both boys and girls... unless there one or two cases of failed Prevention of Mother To Child (PMTCT) HIV transmission. The following year, as they go to high school, the status quo prevailed, they are all HIV negative. But when they complete grade 12, about 7-10 % of girls are HIV positive, yet the boys have remained HIV negative. This is because the girls are not sleeping with boys of the same age. They are getting infection from the older generation. So, when they enter university, 10% of the girls are HIV positive. But by the time they finish their Honours degree after four years, there is 25% HIV positivity among both boys and girl, which means they have infected each other. Therefore, as a society we need to confront and condemn this practice whereby old men with big cars go after young women. It should have no place in our society,” he said.

Dr Dhlomo said to date, the Department had issued more than 800 bursaries, assisting in the production of graduates in Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Oral Hygiene, Radiography (Diagnostic and Ultrasound), Medicine, Psychology (clinical), emergency Medical Care, Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics, Health Promotion, Optometry, Audiology, Psychiatry and Zoology, amongst others.

He also highlighted the positive impact of programmes such as the “Graduate Alive” and “First Things First” Campaign, which he regarded as being highly beneficial to young and bright students, as it assisted them to adapt to the university environment. Such programmes prepared them to respond or act appropriately when confronted with varying challenges away from the support and guidance of their parents.

Dr Dhlomo said the Department of Health fully supported and endorsed the initiatives of the South African Association of Campus Health Services.

“We value the platforms provided by the Association as they enable students to share information and get guidance on personal health matters. In this country we need avenues where we have to make it known that HIV epidemic is associated with a number of behaviours that put our youth at risk of acquiring HIV. He said the country’s youth still needed to be cautioned against:

- Early sexual debut,
- Inconsistent condom use and unprotected sex;
- Sexual violence;
- Inter-generational sex – SUGAR DADDY syndrome
- Multiple sexual partnerships, as well as
- High level of alcohol consumption leading to reckless sexual engagements.

“Our institutions of Higher Learning are appropriate platforms for Health Promotion and students as future leaders must lead at improving access to information, support and referral services for those infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS. They should by example, embrace those infected and thus assist at reducing the stigma and discrimination.

“The KZN Department of Health is fully committed to the production and development of highly trained; healthy and hardworking healthcare professionals. This is evident through our efforts of issuing out R210 million worth of bursaries annually to scores of young people who we are giving a wonderful opportunity to change their lives by studying in various health disciplines.

We take a guide from our beloved President, Honourable Nelson Mandela who once said:

‘A good head and good heart are always a formidable combination. But when you add to that a literate tongue or pen, then you have something very special.’”

Dr Dhlomo said that all the students who are sponsored by the Department should always bear in mind that the department’s initiatives are a means to redress the “shameful history that our country emerges from, a history that fostered segregation in Medical Education.”

“We easily forget that it was only after 1976 that the only avenue that was created for Africans to train in medicine was MEDUNSA. Today with the progressive Government in place, we have students in all institutions of Higher Learning and we are able to sponsor those in need.” “We remain very optimistic that real change in terms of behaviour is possible when looking at all the programmes already in place that include:

- Department of Education Life skills Program
- HIV Counselling and Testing
- Access to Antiretroviral Treatment
- Access to male and female condoms
- Medical Male Circumcision for young men
- Treatment of STIs, as well as,
- Access to contraceptive services

“All our hopes as a young democracy rest on this generation that must help us in actualizing our country’s 2030 Vision,” Dr Dhlomo said.

Ends

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