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MCC News

An e-newsletter about male circumcision for HIV prevention in Kenya

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Titus Okoth, a counsellor with APHIA II Nyanza, discusses male circumcision and HIV prevention with a client at Kenya Acorn Community Hospital in Ndiwa District.

Photo courtesy of APHIA II Nyanza

Male circumcision part of comprehensive HIV prevention

Medical male circumcision is a minor surgical procedure performed as an outpatient service by trained health care professionals.

But men who seek circumcision from the Government of Kenya's voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) programme receive much more than surgical care.

Male circumcision is offered in the Kenyan programme—and in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa—as an integral part of a comprehensive package of HIV prevention services.

This means that the procedure is accompanied by other proven HIV prevention services: HIV testing and counselling; screening for and treatment of sexually transmitted infection; counselling and education on safer sex, and the provision and promotion of condoms.

These services comprise the minimum package of services described in the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation's *Manual for Male Circumcision Under Local Anesthesia*.

Clients' partners are encouraged to come to program sites with the men so that they can receive the HIV prevention services offered along with male circumcision.

Male circumcision does not offer complete protection against HIV, so it is important that the procedure not be perceived as a replacement for other effective HIV prevention measures. That is why the other services in the minimum package are designed to help circumcised men and their partners practice the "ABCs" of safe sex: abstinence, being faithful to one uninfected partner, and correct and consistent use of condoms.

The Kenyan VMMC programme offers this package of HIV prevention services in more than 100 public health facilities, outreach facilities, and mobile facilities in Nyanza Province.

Minimum package in practice

Joshua Osoo of the Nyanza Reproductive Health Society, who is head of counselling at the Universities of Nairobi, Illinois and Manitoba (UNIM) Research and Training Centre in Kisumu, says that it is standard to provide a package of HIV prevention services along with the surgery. He describes the process from the moment a client enters a facility seeking male circumcision.

"The client is taken through a counselling session, where he is given information on reproductive health services, education on risk reduction, and basic information about male circumcision," Osoo explained. "This is done in both the group counselling and individual counselling."

The counsellor also informs each client about HIV counselling and testing, and gives him (and his partner, if she is present) the option of receiving this service. Clients who decide to get tested receive pre- and post-test counselling.

The client receives the test results during a post-test counselling session. After counselling, he is screened for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Clients who have STIs are not eligible for circumcision until the infection has been treated

successfully. Clients are also encouraged to bring in their partners for STI screening and treatment.

During the STI screening, the client's weight and blood pressure are also checked. Eligible clients then proceed to the surgical theatre.

The minor operation lasts between 15 and 45 minutes. Afterwards, the client rests in the recovery room for about 30 minutes. During this time, he receives additional counselling in risk reduction, individually or with his partner, and instructions on wound care and the importance of abstaining from sex until the wound has healed.

After resting, the client is advised to follow these instructions and is released to go home. He is given a hotline number that he can call if he experiences any unexpected or uncomfortable side effects. Clients return to the clinic after seven days for a check-up.

Quality assurance tool to be pilot in Nyanza

A tool that the World Health Organization (WHO) has developed to help supervisors assess and improve the quality of male circumcision services will be piloted in three districts in Nyanza Province beginning in May.

This rapid assessment tool helps the managers and staff of health facilities measure progress towards meeting the standards that the WHO has established for male circumcision programmes. It is designed to be used as a self-assessment tool, but it can also be used by external assessors to certify or accredit facilities.

The tool will be piloted in Kisumu West, Siaya, and Rarieda districts. Twenty-five members of the male circumcision steering committees from those districts were trained in its use at a workshop in Mbita, Suba District, 19-23 April. They also learned how to introduce the rapid assessment tool to others and to facilitate its use.

Kenya was one of the sites for the initial field testing of this rapid assessment tool, and members of the national quality assurance team for male circumcision reviewed it and recommended improvements to WHO. After the piloting in Nyanza, the tool will be discussed at a wider stakeholders' forum.

“The tool is ready for adoption and piloting,” explained Dr. Walter Obiero, clinical manager at the Nyanza Reproductive Health Society. “However, recommendations will be made every now and again to ensure it serves its purpose effectively.”

He noted that using the tool will strengthen health workers' skills overall, because it addresses crosscutting issues, such as supply and logistics management and monitoring and evaluation, that are important for all health services.

Male circumcision in the news

Embracing male “cut” for AIDS prevention

The Standard, 15 April 2010

Voluntary male cut project to be rolled out in urban areas

Daily Nation, 6 April 2010

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A Guide to Indicators for Male Circumcision Programmes in the Formal Health Care System

This guide from the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS presents indicators for monitoring and evaluating male circumcision programmes that can be adapted for use in different countries.

Considerations for Implementing Models for Optimizing the Volume and Efficiency of Male Circumcision Services for HIV Prevention

A field-testing edition from the World Health Organization, this document provides guidance to help programmes make their clinical and surgical activities more efficient so that they can meet the demand for male circumcision services in a variety of healthcare settings.

The Male Circumcision Consortium (MCC) works with the Government of Kenya and other partners to prevent HIV and save lives by expanding access to safe and voluntary male circumcision services. Family Health International (FHI), EngenderHealth, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, working with the Nyanza Reproductive Health Society, are partners in the Consortium, which is funded by a grant to FHI from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Please send questions or comments to Silas Achar at: mccinfo@fhi.org; also, please indicate whether you want to continue receiving this e-newsletter regularly.