



# News

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## MCC News

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

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Dr. Hiep Nguyen, team leader, and Dr. F.A. Otiemo, a surgeon at Kisumu District Hospital, perform corrective surgery during a surgical mission to Nyanza by the International Volunteers in Urology Medicine.

*Photo by Silas Achar/FHI*

### **Clients benefit from corrective surgery**

Zecky Odhiambo, 21, wanted to get circumcised after he learned about the health benefits of the procedure, but one thing held him back.

“When I heard about medical male circumcision and that it could reduce my chances of contracting HIV, I always wanted to go and get circumcised,” he said. “But I had a swelling on my penis, and I was afraid to go.”

Odhiambo finally put aside his fears about the condition he had lived with since birth and sought voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) services. Now he is glad that he did. As a result, he was among 46 men who benefited from a recent surgical mission by the International Volunteers in Urology Medicine (IVU Med),

sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO), to perform corrective surgeries for men with congenital penile malformations.

During the routine pre-operative screening for VMMC, Odhiambo had learned that he could not be circumcised until his condition had been treated. He could not afford the corrective surgery, so he concluded that he could never be circumcised. But his VMMC counselor told him that there was hope, because a surgical mission was coming from the United States to perform free surgeries to treat conditions like his.

Odhiambo happily reports that he was able to obtain the corrective surgery and get circumcised during the recent surgical mission at Kisumu District Hospital. “The swelling has always made me stigmatised because other boys would laugh at me when they saw it,” he said. “I am happy because a condition that made me uncomfortable for long is now corrected and behind me. I am even happier that I have now been circumcised as I have always wanted.”

The surgical mission was conducted by 12 volunteer surgeons, nurses, and anaesthetists affiliated with Harvard University’s Boston Children’s Hospital, working in collaboration with surgeons from Nyanza and Nairobi from 27 April to May 6. The volunteers came to Kenya in response to a request for assistance from the Nyanza and national task forces on male circumcision through the WHO.

“During screening for men who turn out for male circumcision, a number of them were discovered to have treatable penile congenital malformations,” said Dr. Walter Obiero, clinical manager at the Nyanza Reproductive Health Society and the national and provincial task forces’ local liaison for the medical mission.

The identification of 200 men in need of corrective surgery and the lack of adequate capacity among local surgeons to perform the corrective surgeries, Dr. Obiero explained, prompted the invitation to international volunteers.

Dr. Obiero commended WHO and IVU Med for offering to provide corrective surgeries for cases of congenital penile malformation that had been identified during routine provision of VMMC services. “A number of men who need these corrective surgeries can hardly afford the cost, and it is refreshing to see WHO and IVU Med come in to help,” he said.

During the mission, surgeons from Nyanza’s Kisumu District and Aga Khan hospitals and Nairobi’s Kenyatta National, University of Nairobi, and Mbagathi hospitals were trained to perform the surgeries, while local nurses learned how to monitor and care for the surgical wounds.

“We are hopeful that this partnership will help in building the capacity of local surgeons to carry forward what has been started,” Dr. Obiero said.

During the first medical mission, most of the patients were treated for the most common form of congenital penile malformation, known as hypospadias, in which the opening of the urethra is on the underside of the penis instead of at the tip.

An IVU team will return to Nyanza in September to work with their Kenyan colleagues. They hope to reach many of the rest of the 200 men who were identified through VMMC services as needing corrective surgery.

“I would appeal to more of the men to come out next time, because these are not shameful conditions, but are situations that can be corrected,” said Dr. Hiep Nguyen, team leader for IVU Med.

The health benefits of VMMC services are not limited to reducing men’s risk of HIV infection. Dr. Obiero notes that the surgical missions, which address in part a national VMMC programme goal of providing reproductive health services to men who ordinarily would not access them, are an example of one of these additional benefits.

“Men have reproductive health needs, but they are either too stigmatised to seek services, or they don’t have access to those services,” he said. “Medical male circumcision has become an important entry point to provide men with essential reproductive health services.”

These services include voluntary HIV counselling and testing, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, risk-reduction counselling, and provision of condoms with instruction on their use, which are offered along with medical male circumcision. In the future, the government aims to link men with additional reproductive health services, such as family planning services and management of reproductive cancers, through its VMMC programme.

### **Turkana journalists receive training in VMMC reporting**

More than 1,500 men and boys have been circumcised during the past month in the Rift Valley’s Turkana County, where the government plans to officially launch a voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) programme later this year.

In April, the government and the Nyanza Reproductive Health Society began offering free VMMC services at Lodwar District Hospital, Kainuk Dispensary, and Kakuma Youth Travelers Building with support from the U.S. President’s Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

The three facilities provide these services to up to 30 clients a day, reported Dr. Joseph Epem, district medical officer of health for Turkana Central and Loima, who coordinates the VMMC programme in the county.

Dr. Epem was speaking at the opening of a workshop for Turkana County journalists in Lodwar on 16 May. Thirteen journalists from local newspapers and radio stations participated in this week-long event, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and conducted by the Male Circumcision Consortium (MCC) and Internews, to inform them about the VMMC programme and the science behind male circumcision for HIV prevention.

The workshop was part of a concerted effort by the Kenya National Task Force on Male Circumcision, in collaboration with the Turkana health management team, to reach out to various groups in the community in preparation for the launch of the VMMC programme.

Dr. Athanasius Ochieng, male circumcision programme manager at the National AIDS and STI Control Programme (NASCOP), and Dr. Mores Loolpait, an associate director at FHI and manager of the MCC, represented the national task force at the workshop.

## **Male circumcision in the news**

### **Scientists see breakthrough in the global AIDS battle**

*The Wall Street Journal*, 12 May

### **State to continue funding male cut**

*The Standard*, 30 April

## **Resources**

### **Manual for Early Infant Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention**

The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with Jhpiego, developed this manual to help providers and programme managers deliver safe, high-quality infant male circumcision services for HIV prevention and other health benefits.

### **The Clearinghouse on Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention**

Developed by the World Health Organization, AVAC, and FHI, this Web site is a comprehensive source of information and resources about male circumcision for HIV prevention.

**The Male Circumcision Consortium (MCC)** works with the Government of Kenya and other partners—including the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which supports service delivery—to prevent HIV and save lives by expanding access to safe and voluntary male circumcision services. 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.

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