

ARV not effective in HIV prevention among unmarried women

IN SUMMARY

Researchers say they expected that the daily use of Truvada would be more effective as suggested by earlier studies.

Kampala

Results from a new HIV prevention study suggest that daily use of truvada, an oral antiretroviral tablet, may not be the best option to prevent HIV among young unmarried women.

Researchers of the four-year study, yesterday said the three products tested in the VOICE (Vaginal and Oral interventions to control the epidemic) study-- tenofovir gel, oral tenofovir and oral truvada were all found to be ineffective among women.

Many women, the study found did not adhere consistently to the products. The study, conducted by the US National Institutes of Health-funded Microbicides Trial Networks in South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe enrolled 5,029 women. The trial 2009, aimed at testing whether antiretroviral medicines commonly used in treating HIV are safe and effective in preventing sexual transmission of HIV in women.

In the findings, 312 women of the 5,029 enrolled acquired HIV during the study, an incidence rate nearly twice the rate that the investigators had expected. According to Dr Mike Chirenje, the lead investigator from the University of Zimbabwe, said failure by participants to adhere to the use of the drugs gave the impression that the approach will not work in combating the epidemic.

In Uganda, the team led by Dr Clemensia Nakabiito, enrolled 322 young married and unmarried women, nine of whom acquired HIV during the study at an incidence rate of 2.1 per cent, compared to 1.8 per cent of the general population. While in South Africa the rate was as high as 10 per cent.

This, according to Dr Nakabiito was rather a very high incidence.

“We had hoped that daily use of these products would be more effective especially since other studies had suggested the same,” she said yesterday at a teleconference while the results of the study were being released.

But the results were very disappointing, mainly because the women enrolled did not consider themselves at a high risk and as such, failed to adhere to the treatment as recommended.” However, adherence rate was found relatively higher at 21 per cent among the married women.

aayebazibwe@ug.nationmedia.com

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