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AIDS-Statistics

MORE PEOPLE GET HIV FROM SEX THAN FROM NEEDLE SHARING

KUALA LUMPUR, May 18 (Bernama) -- More people in the country could have contracted the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) through unsafe sexual relations than through needle sharing, said Malaysian Aids Council President, Marina Mahathir today.

There are more people indulging in unsafe sex than drug abuse, she said at a talk on HIV/Aids held at the National Library today.

Speaking to reporters after the talk, Marina said the public needs to clear up misconceptions about AIDS statistics and about the spread of the virus and syndrome.

The Health Ministry statistics show that 77 percent of the 15,731 people with HIV until March 31 this year are drug abusers.

Nonetheless, Marina said making conclusions that more people contracted AIDS from needle sharing than other means, based on that statistic alone is not accurate.

Furthermore, there are no statistics on drug abusers who also engaged in unsafe sex.

She said drug abusers constitute a large proportion of that statistics because those caught by the authorities have to go through mandatory HIV tests.

"It's like 'fishing in the same pond syndrome', if you impose mandatory HIV tests only on bankers, for example, you will suddenly find there are more HIV statistics among bankers than other professions," she explained.

Marina said more rigorous education effort has to be focussed on women because it is four times easier for the virus to be transmitted from a man to a woman than vice versa in unsafe sex practices.

Marina also said that there are many cases of women who contracted AIDS from their husbands and thus, likely to pass it on to their babies.

Therefore, she stressed that the public should be sensitive to these facts and not deduce that only 'bad' people will get AIDS. -- BERNAMA

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