

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Gonorrhea Among Youth

As we have discussed in our previous bulletins, more than a million Malawians are living with HIV (NAC).

Out of the one million people with HIV, nearly a third are young people under the age of 24.

It is also reported that apart from HIV, other sexually transmitted infections such as *syphilis* and gonorrhea are spreading among young people in Malawi.

In this bulletin, we will discuss one of the sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) that is common among young people— gonorrhea, or otherwise known as *Chindoko* in Chichewa.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the dangers and symptoms of gonorrhea
- To discuss some of the behaviours that put the youth at risk of contracting gonorrhea
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about gonorrhea and the youth

The Problem: Gonorrhea Among the Youth

Malawi has a youthful population. According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) nearly three-quarters of the population is under the age of 30.

Therefore, there is a need to ensure that the youth are aware of things that could put their health at risk.

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can cause infertility. It and other STI's are one of the most common reason for consultation in the adult outpatient clinics nationwide.

A nurse, who asked not to be identified, but works at the

Namitambo Health Centre in Chiradzulu, says gonorrhea is common among young people that she is seeing.

She attributes this to: having multiple sexual partners and having unprotected sex.

She said young people need to be tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections – before having unprotected sex.

She says some young people feel embarrassed to go the hospital to seek medical attention when they realize that they have contracted an STI.

She warns that if left untreated, gonorrhea can cause infertility.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help young people from your community understand the symptoms and signs of gonorrhea and how they can avoid contracting it.

Let the youth know that the only sure way to avoid contracting gonorrhea is abstinence. Assure them that when one abstains they avoid the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection.

If a person is sexually active they need to use condoms correctly and consistently to avoid contracting gonorrhea and other STI's. Condoms are highly effective against the most dangerous of sexually transmitted infections – HIV

Condoms are readily available at supermarkets, filling stations, pharmacies and grocery stores. They are also frequently distributed for free in some health clinics. Remind them that condoms can only be effective if they are used correctly and every time they have sex.

It is also important to remind the youth that if they are involved in multiple sexual partnerships, then they are at high risk of contracting gonorrhea or other STI's.

The symptoms of gonorrhoea infection are different in women and men. People infected with gonorrhea may have no symptoms at all. If symptoms do occur, they usually appear two to seven days after infection.

They include -- a burning sensation when urinating, a yellowish/white discharge from the penis or vagina and pain in the lower abdomen.

Do a vox pop with young people from your area and find out if they know the symptoms of gonorrhea.

Interview a nurse on the dangers of gonorrhoea and how it can be avoided.

Conduct a talk show or program on ways to avoid sexual transmitted infections.

- Sandra Mapemba -Population Reference Bureau-PRB- Contact person+265-99-921-9789
- Barwani Msiska- Ministry of Health-0888740469
- Jean Mwalabu; Department of Reproductive Health: +265993210392

