

FIGO Reaffirms Commitment: World Aids Day

On 1 December 2014, FIGO reaffirms its commitment to highlighting World AIDS Day, an international day raising awareness about HIV and AIDS globally. Between 2011-2015, World AIDS Days have the theme of 'Getting to Zero: Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths'. What is the issue? 150 – 250 words

Global AIDS epidemic facts and figures (1)

- In 2013, there were 35 million [33.2 million–37.2 million] people living with HIV
- New HIV infections have fallen by 38% since 2001
- New HIV infections among children have declined by 58% since 2001
- AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 35% since the peak in 2005
- In 2013, around 12.9 million people living with HIV had access to antiretroviral therapy
- TB-related deaths in people living with HIV have fallen by 36% since 2004

Women and girls are affected by HIV and AIDS to a significant degree - they are more likely to become infected as a result of biological factors, gender inequalities, gender-based violence and economic vulnerability. HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death worldwide for women aged 15-44 years, with unsafe sex being the main risk factor in developing countries (2). Additionally, the impact upon women has been exacerbated by their roles within society as primary caregivers, as they look after other sufferers and orphaned children. Women also have to contend with issues surrounding mother-to-child transmission of HIV - many do not have adequate access to drugs to lessen the chances of their unborn children contracting HIV.

Professor Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, FIGO President, said: 'Professional organisations can play an extremely important role at the community level, influencing and guiding communities. This is particularly critical in such sensitive areas as HIV prevention and treatment. Women living under the burden of HIV need to access adequate healthcare services; they also need to receive a high standard of care and attention from healthcare providers. Providers in turn need to ensure their training systems are robust, and cover such areas as non-discrimination, informed consent, and confidentiality.'

He continued: 'At FIGO's last World Congress in Rome, October 2012, it consolidated its relationship with UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS has now joined the FIGO Committee for Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights (WSRR), with the aim of working through FIGO's Member Societies to help respond effectively to sexual and reproductive rights' violations faced by women living with HIV. The Committee has developed a checklist of rights competencies and case studies for the continuing education of health professionals, including midwives, students and post-graduates. UNAIDS has facilitated two dedicated case studies on the sexual and reproductive rights' violations faced by women living with HIV.'

‘FIGO is now in the process of expanding its partnership with UNAIDS to start national awareness campaigns to raise awareness on the violation of the sexual and reproductive rights of women living with HIV, in particular the occurrence of coerced and forced sterilisation.’

Professor Arulkumaran ended: ‘As the world continues to make progress in achieving Millennium Development Goal no 6 - combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases - it is reported in The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014 that there are still too many new cases of HIV appearing (3). The world must continue its robust efforts at a global level to help raise awareness and reduce associated stigma.’

Sources/resources:

- (1) <http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/factsheets/>
- (2) <http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en/>
- (3) <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/mdg/the-millennium-developmentgoals-report-2014.html>
- http://www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/diseases/en/
- http://www.glowm.com/womens_health_rights

About FIGO

FIGO is a professional organisation that brings together obstetrical and gynecological associations from all over the world.

FIGO's vision is that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. We lead on global programme activities, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

FIGO advocates on a global stage, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and non-communicable diseases (SDG3). We also work to raise the status of women and enable their active participation to achieve their reproductive and sexual rights, including addressing FGM and gender based violence (SDG5).

We also provide education and training for our Member Societies and build capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, good practice and promotion of policy dialogues.

FIGO is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a consultative status with the United Nations (UN).