

BENEATH THE DREADED SKIN

writes Ramatamo Wa Matamong

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HOLISTIC APPROACH: Traditional healers says they support Medical Male Circumcision

PICTURE: Ramatamo Wa Matamong

“I am one of those men who get easily tempted. I go out a lot clubbing, ladies are there. This is fun. So being circumcised is extra protection,” says Kingsley Shezi (not his real name) from Alexandra.

This 27 year old married father of a three year old daughter has been circumcised outside the borders of Alexandra.

He says this is no longer just a cultural tradition, but a decision that every man should take to protect himself against various sexual diseases.

Even if it not always easy...Shezi recalls how he stripped off his pants in front of a female nurse. “Obviously you are going to be shy, but I told myself, I will never do this again and this might be first and the last time seeing this person”.

“As we like to call it, circumcision is like insurance policy: if condom burst you have a back up” says Doctor Ntlotleng Mabena,

operations manager at Centre for Health and Prevention Studies (CHAPS). “By removing the foreskin we are trying to get rid of Langerhan cells which attract HIV.

These cells are lying under the foreskin and the circumcision removes 60% of them. That's why it reduces the chances of HIV virus infection by at least 60%. Other cells are found at the urine pipe. It means that men should still use a condom after circumcision”.

“One of the benefits of circumcision is not only to maintain the cleanliness of the penis, but to reduce cervical cancer in women and penile cancer” adds Doctor Hillary Mukudu of Khula Ndoda medical male circumcision clinic at Baragwanath Hospital. Masike Morelle of “Right to Care” explains : “We offer a comprehensive package : besides an HIV test before circumcision at Helen Joseph, we check other underlying conditions, such

as diabetes and high blood pressure, which affects the healing of the wound. If one is found to be HIV positive, we encourage treatment immediately.

Circumcision has given us an opportunity to pick up such diseases at an early stage, since some men do not like to go to the doctor to check themselves”. During his recent interview on Alex FM, Morelle emphasised that Right to Care will be happy to transport men from Alexandra free of charge to Helen Joseph, the nearest circumcision site.

King Goodwill Zwelithini has come out publicly in support of male circumcision, saying this will help him in his fight against HIV in KZN. Circumcision is a free of charge service offered to all males from 15 years old (Helen Joseph, Bophelo Pele and Zola) and sometimes even younger (11 years old at Khula Ndoda).

Minors under 18 need parental consent. The operation takes just 20 minutes and 6 weeks to heal. Circumcision at birth is also considered in future.

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