

# RHRP NEWSLETTER



**EMPOWER  
TANZANIA**

Hi, everyone! Happy New Year! As the first newsletter of 2020, let me just emphasise the amazing work you are doing: a total of 365 teachers have taught over 11,000 children in Same content around relationships, their bodies, consent, puberty, bullying and discrimination, and reproductive health. This has enabled children to tell you, their teachers, and their families about issues they've been having, and seeking help from lots of different sources. The work you are doing is changing lives, not only by preventing teenage pregnancies, but by enabling young people to be more confident about their bodies and empowering them to help themselves in the future.

In this issue, we will be answering more questions put to us on the school visits (please keep them coming), as well having a focus section on Syphilis—a STI with serious consequences. Please get in contact if you would like a particular topic covered in any future issue.

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

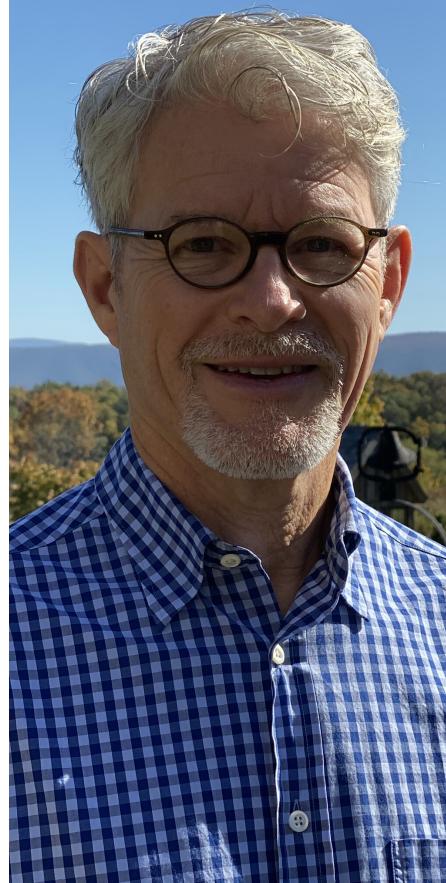


We want to know about you! We would like to include a spotlight section on someone new each month. Send us your stories of teaching the sessions and a little bit about you ... you could see yourself here next issue!

## NOTES FROM DR. JEFF...

Improving student awareness and knowledge of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is a significant part of the Reproductive Health and Relationships Program. STIs can spread through the mouth, genital or anal areas of the body and the consequences of an infection can range from rashes and sores anywhere on the body to infertility, brain damage, liver damage, cancers and death. Even a child that is delivered by an infected mother can become infected and suffer from an STI. Adding to the complexity of this subject is that some STIs have no symptoms at all.

This newsletter discusses syphilis, a bacterial infection that is transmitted sexually through contact with the genitals, mouth or anus of an infected person. Syphilis can have a variety of symptoms ranging from a mouth sore in early stages to deformed teeth and legs in babies born to a mother who has syphilis. I imagine that many people who acquire syphilis are at first relieved when the initial sore or fever goes away after a few weeks and they think they are healthy. Then, they may be puzzled when a rash, sore throat or



an assortment of other symptoms occur weeks later. The disease is difficult to diagnose without testing because it can have many different symptoms at many different times, sometimes years later.

The real lesson here is to avoid exposure to STIs whenever possible. The most effective way to avoid STIs is to not have sex, as you have been teaching the students. A way to reduce the risk is to use condoms when having sex because condoms provide a physical barrier against the spread of the virus, bacterium or parasite. Condoms are not always effective, but are a great improvement compared with unprotected sex.



If you have a comment or suggestion about the newsletter, please email Jessica at [jhaw1@gmail.com](mailto:jhaw1@gmail.com) with the subject title "Newsletter." If you need any help with a teaching issue, please contact Catherine at [catherinewales17@gmail.com](mailto:catherinewales17@gmail.com) or Yoeza at [yoezalmnzava@gmail.com](mailto:yoezalmnzava@gmail.com)



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **Q: Does a child under 18 need consent of a parent to be tested for HIV/AIDS?**

**A:** Tanzania Ministry of Health & Social Welfare (“MOHSW”) and National AIDS Control Programme guidelines permit minors who are married, parents or sexually active to independently consent to HIV testing. This is because it is assumed that those who are married, sexually active or parents, have the ability to understand the results. However, if a minor is not deemed to have the capacity to fully understand the results, the healthcare provider is legally allowed to contact the child’s parents or guardians if the result is positive, with or without the consent of the child.

The diagnosis is a life-changing issue, and many people, regardless of age, may need support and help from those around them. A positive HIV result of a child or young person means they are very likely to need support of family members to understand the situation and help with medication.

As an adult (after 18), the healthcare provider cannot disclose the result of a HIV test to anyone without the express consent of the patient.

## **Q: What is the reason some couples cannot have a baby?**

**A:** There are many potential reasons why a couple may not be able to conceive. Some reasons are related to the female, some are related to the male. It is impossible to guess what the reasons are for a couple. Some are simple, some are very complex. Some can be treated, some cannot. This is a question the specific person or couple need to discuss with a healthcare provider.

## **Q: What are the effects of having sex with animals?**

**A:** Sex with animals is illegal. Sex with animals is abusive to animals who cannot consent and are often injured in this activity. It is therefore a form of animal cruelty. Serious injury to humans can result from sex with animals because of the animals’ reaction. Although most STIs are associated with person-to-person contact, there are infections that are known to affect humans that can spread from sex with animals, such as worms, fleas, scabies and many types of bacterial and viral infections.

# FOCUS SECTION: SYPHILIS

We want to focus on one topic each issue to provide additional information. These are picked at random, but if you have a request, please contact Jessica!

Syphilis is a bacterial infection usually spread by sexual contact. The disease starts as a painless sore — typically on your genitals, rectum or mouth. Syphilis spreads from person to person via skin or mucous membrane contact with these sores. It can also be passed from a mother to their baby before or during birth. After the initial infection, the syphilis bacteria can remain inactive (dormant) in your body for decades before becoming active again. Early syphilis can be cured, sometimes with a single shot (injection) of penicillin. Without treatment, syphilis can severely damage your heart, brain or other organs, and can be life-threatening.

## Primary Infection

The first sign of syphilis is a small sore which appears at the spot where the bacteria entered your body. While most people infected with syphilis develop only one sore, some people develop several of them. The sore usually develops about three weeks after exposure. Many people who have syphilis don't notice the sore because it's usually painless, and it may be hidden within the vagina or rectum. The sore will heal on its own within three to six weeks.

## Secondary Infection

Within a few weeks of the original sore healing, people may develop a rash that begins on your torso but eventually covers your entire body — even the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet. This rash is usually not itchy and may be accompanied by wart like sores in your mouth or genital area. Some people also experience hair loss, muscle aches, a fever, a sore throat and swollen lymph nodes. These signs and symptoms may disappear within a few weeks or repeatedly come and go for as long as a year.

## Latent (Hidden) Infection

If you aren't treated for syphilis, the disease moves from the secondary stage to the hidden (latent) stage, when you have no symptoms. The latent stage can last for years. Signs and symptoms may never return, or the disease may progress to the third (tertiary) stage.

## Tertiary (Late) Infection

About 15% to 30% of people infected with syphilis who don't get treatment will develop complications known as late (tertiary) syphilis. In the late stage, the disease may damage your brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones and joints. These problems may occur many years after the original, untreated infection.

## Babies with Syphilis

Babies born to women who have syphilis can become infected through the placenta or during birth. Most newborns with congenital syphilis have no symptoms, although some experience a rash on the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet. Later signs and symptoms may include deafness, teeth deformities and saddle nose — where the bridge of the nose collapses. However, babies born with syphilis can also be born too early, be born dead (stillborn) or die after birth.

# SPOTLIGHT



## **Omari Magongo, BA-Ed, MA-Ed Kibacha Secondary School Headmaster**

Reproductive health and relationships education for young people especially students are more important at this time than any other period of the existence of formal educational institutions. The Empower Tanzania organization has created a curriculum that contains the basics of teaching and involving students, a step which has opened the eyes of many responsible groups for nurturing including teachers.

Evidence demonstrates that students who receive reproductive health and relationships education, despite being aware of how to live healthily and morally, are also free to communicate with teachers or parents about their health and morals.

The research I conducted at my school, Kibacha Secondary School, revealed that students have been more open and close to their teachers in expressing and clearly articulating their health and relationships challenges than before the Reproductive Health and Relationships Program had been implemented here at school.

It is through Reproductive Health and Relationship Program that Kibacha Secondary School has divided students into groups of 15 to 20 students where each teacher is assigned as a family and provides them with education and advice on health and relationships in the community where they are.

However, the challenge that I see in the implementation of this program, is lack of special rooms or offices for student and teacher to meet secretly/confidentially and discuss the challenges they face in their daily lives at home, on the road and at school. There are issues and challenges that require extremely privacy when discussing or student reporting to the teacher. Challenges as a student is being raped, abused, and sexually assaulted and especially when the perpetrator is the closest relatives of the family.

Empower Tanzania organization, in cooperation with other stakeholders in reproductive health and relationships education, with specific intentions, challenges facing young people, especially girls, including teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases will be reduced if not totally completed in society.

Only through a comprehensive and sustained reproductive health and relationship strategy, Tanzania will have a healthy and productive society in every sector including education, health, economy, and society.