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Doubting Thomases

and the Kemron drug

such HIV positives as 'Joe Muriuki and the late

Bongoley, who courageously ignored possible social

stigma and came out to tell their story hoping

it would help save others.

Talking of the precautions she takes to avoid·

the venereal diseases, she says she prefers her men

wearing condoms. The rubbers are on sale at the

club for Shl0 each. "But if they run out of supply,

I won't let my children starve," she says..

One thing she emphasizes is that her men have

to undergo a kind of visual inspection.

"I like them removing their clothes while the

lights are still on. There are some diseases which

can be visually detected. Then I will say 'no!.' If

they refuse- to take off their clothes while the

lights are on, I will also say 'no!' and refund the

money," she says.

But how effective her sight and sense of judgment can be late in the night when she is most

likely not only tired but also drunk and broke is

another thing all together .....

Ironically, despite the ongoing massive anti-aids

campaign, one would have generally expected the

wananchi to be more cautious about sexually

transmitted diseases. But this is not so .

A doctor who' runs a private clinic along River

Road, which is popular with venereal disease patients

says he has been treating increasingly more

STD cases than was the case in the past.

According to Prof J. Oliech, the Director of

Medical Services, the level of awareness about

Aids has increased in the country but behaviours

have not changed.

He says some of the emerging anti-Aids drugs

including Kemron are welcome and give an added

dimension in treatment in Aids patients. However

prevention is more important than the drugs because

the disease has no cure yet.

Prof Oliech recently told a consultative workshop

on Aids management for senior health official

studies on Kemron were still going on and plan&

were underway for an expanded clinical study and

use of Kemron.

He said the highest number of Aids cases come

from Coast, Nairobi and Nyanza provinces in that

order while up to four per cent of blood donors in

some high prevalence areas test positive.

The director of Kenyatta National Hospital, Dr

Nelson Agata, says up to 70 per cent of Aids cW

are of people in their most productive .ages. "

is linked with high risk behaviour. Its occurrence I

high in people regularly contracting sexually

transmitted diseases," he said.

Dr Agata says that "over 40 per cent of tuberculosis

patients also have Aids.

Precautionary guidelines issued by the Ministry

of Health say sticking to only one partner, the so

called "zero-grazing" is the only effective "vaccine"

against Aids. However use of condoms may

also reduce chances of infection but this is not

fool-proof.

In fact, in some Western countries, men preferring

not to use condoms are charged much more

by the prostitutes. However, Waithira says that

does not apply to her.

Aids is mainly transmitted through sex. It can

also be passed on through blood transfusion or in

cases where such blood-stained tools like needles,

shaving machines, traditional circumcisers' knives

ete are used before being sterilised.

Perhaps the most horrifying aspect of the disease

is that, the possibility of proper diagnosis in

the early stages are still very slim. Experts say the

virus could spend as many as ten years before it

broke down the body's defence mechanism.'

And when that happens, woe unto the doubting

Thomases. Dr Davy Koech and Prof Arthur Obel,

the scientists who developed Kemron."Kemron

may give Aids sufferers the best chance available

but it is not yet a cure."