New status for Obel drug

New status for Obel's anti-Aids drug

By MUTHUI MWAI

The anti-Aids drug Pearl Omega yesterday bounced back into the limelight after the Ministry of Health accorded it the provisional status of "New Investigational Drug".

The drug, touted by its inventor Prof Arthur Obel as an effective cure for Aids, has been embroiled in controversy since its existence became public knowledge earlier this year.

During heated debates in Parliament, the Government issued contradictory statements over the efficacy of the new drug.

A Ministerial statement read by Health Assistant Minister Basil Criticos in Parliament declared Pearl

Omega an effective Aids cure capable of reversing the HIV virus in a host from positive to negative.

Later, Health Minister Joshua Angatia dismissed the drug as a herbal concoction without any proven medicinal value.

In May; the Government outlawed the sale of Pearl Omega in any pharmaceutical outlet nationwide until a formal announcement that the drug is registered by the Pharmacy and Poisons Board.

But, undeterred, Prof Obel announced last May that he was researching a vaccine against HIV/Aids, stressing that he intended to conform to scientific conventions. He said then that he expected the vaccine to be ready "in the next six months".

Last month, Cabinet Minister Kamwithi Munyi and Kerio South MP Nicholas Biwott praised Prof Obel for his discovery of Pearl Omega. They said the professor should be encouraged in his work since the Western world underestimated the capability of Africans in research work.

Yesterday, Director of Medical Services James Mwanzia confirmed that Pearl Omega had been presented to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board, saying the New Investigational Drug status would enable Prof Obel to make Pearl Omega available for extended clinical trials as provided for by WHO.

However, Dr Mwanzia, cautioned that the drug should not be sold in any pharmaceutical outlet

"in view of this status".