

# EKURHULENI POSITIVE TALK

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Rape; Officially a reduction but Unofficially

Preventing HIV after sexual abuse

How to access Post Exposure Prophylactic medicines

TAC Events

Contributors:  
Nokhwezi Hoboyi  
Luckyboy Mkhondwane

Greg Nicholson  
Keamogetswe  
Mooketsi

Contact us at: 141  
Victoria and Oden-  
daal Str, Germis-  
ton.  
Tel: 011 873 4130

## EDITORIAL

We cannot seriously face the HIV/AIDS epidemic without first addressing the emotional and physical abuse of women. Every moment, women are humiliated, beaten and raped, often within their own homes. Rape spreads HIV. Fear of violence makes it hard to insist on using a condom or to decide to get tested. And financial dependence on male partners makes it difficult to escape even the worst abuse.

According to police, rape in Ekurhuleni has become less frequent. Reported cases have fallen in 4 out of the last 6 years. This is a positive sign, but police statistics generally reflect crime reporting practices rather than actual incidences of crime. Because gender based violence often occurs within the home and is frequently committed by someone you know, it regularly goes unreported. Whether the victim decides to report will depend on levels of self-blame, perceptions of the justice system and if they see it as a crime or not. Some studies estimate that up to 88% of rapes go unreported.

There has been a worrying trend of sexual assault against lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual or intersex individuals and silence surrounding all abuse leads to victims going untreated and stalling on the progress from sufferer to survivor. Rape victims have the right to receive treatment that prevents them contracting HIV. No report needs to be made to access this medication but victims are still choosing to stay away from hospitals and risking infection. For those wishing to receive treatment, availability is still a problem.



HIV is more prevalent in young women than in any other group. Unequal power relationships between men and women will help spread HIV and upset attempts trying to dull its impact. Women must be able to protect themselves, receive care and treatment and provide a voice in a world that concerns them.

*Nokhwezi Hoboyi*

*Ekurhuleni District Policy,  
Communications and Research  
Coordinator*

## Rape: Officially a Reduction but Unofficially?

Every three minutes. And that's only for children. Official numbers have recorded a drop in recent years but studies estimate that South Africa's rape statistics remain traumatically high and changes must be made to prevent and effectively treat sexual assault and its victims.

In Ekurhuleni, reported rapes fell by 9% in 2007-2008, a substantial change given that in the years between 2001-2007 reported rapes only fell by 8.8%. As almost eight rapes were reported each day in the municipality, 2007-2008 was the only year to meet the government's crime reduction target of 7-10% per year. Areas most affected by rape were Katshele, Tembisa, Tembisa and Vosloorus while the Zonkizizwe and Edenpark police stations have seen significant increases this decade.

Unfortunately, police reports do not always reflect crime frequency. Rape is under-reported because of social stigma, perceptions around the effectiveness of the justice system, fear of retaliation and whether or not victims define what has happened to them as rape. This means many rapes go unreported. A recent study by the Medical Research Council (MRC) estimates that one in four South African men have committed rape and one in twenty had raped a woman or girl in the last year. It is estimated that rape's silence is loudest around children. 45% of rapes are against children and it is believed that up to 88% of rapes are not reported. This means that one child is raped every three minutes in South Africa.

The treatment and justice that a rape survivor deserves relies largely on the police and courts. *Waiting Opportunities* looked at sexual abuse in schools and found that government reactions, like school and community reactions, were perceived by female students as inadequate. For the girls who were brave enough to go to the police and risk retaliation from their partner, they found their claims were not taken seriously. Often, the police made them feel like they were to blame for the crime. 'The police have to change. They must treat us better, we are not the criminals but the victims,' a grade eleven girl commented.



*'The police have to change. They must treat us better, we are not the criminals but the victims,' ...*

Very few reported rapes result in anyone serving jail time. Past figures indicate that only 16% of reported rapes are prosecuted and 8% result in conviction.

This seems low given rape's disturbing effects. How often HIV is caused by rape is unclear. However every time forced sex occurs there is a chance of transmitting the virus. The MRC study found that a woman raped by a man over 25 has a 1 in 4 chance of her attacker being HIV positive.

In 2007 South Africa passed new laws against sexual abuse. A wider range of abuses are now classified as rape and measures have been set up to protect the sexual exploitation of children and the mentally disabled.

But more needs to be done, both for the prevention and treatment of rape. It seems clear that despite a reduction in police figures, rape escapes the justice system and women carry the majority of its burden. As victims continue to stay quiet about rape, they will be less likely to receive PEP treatment and risk contracting HIV.

### PUBLIC HEALTH ESTABLISHMENTS PROVIDING PEP TREATMENT IN EKURHULENI

- Far East Rand Hospital (011) 817 1426
- Germiston Hospital (011) 345 1200

- Jabulani Dumane CHC (011) 863 7797
- Natalspruit Hospital (011) 389 0500
- Nokuthela Ngwenya (011) 734 2111
- Pholosong Hospital (011) 738 5020
- Tambo Memorial Hospital (011) 892 1144
- Tembisa Hospital (011) 926 0814

## Preventing HIV After Sexual Abuse

**SEXUAL ASSAULT DOES NOT HAVE TO RESULT IN HIV. AFTER BEING EXPOSED TO THE VIRUS THERE IS A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INFECTION.**

PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) is the name given to the antiretrovirals (ARVs) that may help sexual assault survivors avoid infection. It has been shown to prevent HIV in at least 80% of cases. To be effective, the medicine needs to be administered as soon as possible and must be taken within 72 hours of the sexual assault. A rape survivor does not need to lay a charge in order to receive treatment.

PEP is available free in hospitals and some clinics. If you have suffered from sexual abuse you should report to a hospital immediately. It is important you receive initial counseling, an examination and be given an HIV test. This requires your consent but is in your best interest.

Some patients are shown to have had HIV/AIDS before the assault and cannot take PEP. If this is the case, you must be given counseling and information on living positively with HIV/AIDS. If the test results cannot be accessed straight away, you will be given a PEP starter pack that lasts until the results are known. If the HIV test comes back negative you need to start on PEP ARVs immediately. You will begin a four-week programme of medication. Although the drugs have unpleasant side effects such as nausea, headaches, rashes and diarrhea they do not last long and it is crucial that the ARVs be taken without interruption.

### How can I access PEP medicines after sexual abuse?

You need to go to your doctor as soon as you can and ask about anti-retroviral medicines that could reduce the risk of getting HIV. These medicines are called "post-exposure prophylaxis" or PEP. You must start taking the medicine as soon as possible. If more than 72 hours (3 days) have passed since you were raped, these medicines will not work.

You should ask the doctor to give you an HIV test. Before and after taking an HIV test you must be counseled and receive information about what the test means. While you are waiting for the results of the HIV test, the doctor may give you the medicine so that you can start taking it immediately. This is called a starter pack.

If you test HIV positive the medicines that may reduce your risk of getting HIV from rape will be stopped. Ask the doctor about things you can do to look after yourself when you have HIV. Find out about organisations and people that can help you live positively and taking antiretrovirals that will help you manage HIV.

If you only get a starter pack, go back to the doctor to get the results

A worrying number of PEP receivers do not take their full course of medication and risk HIV. Accounting for over 40% of rape victims, availability of PEP is crucial for children. Not all of the government's ART providers offer PEP for children.

Youth over 14 do not need permission to receive treatment but those under 14 need a parent or guardian's consent unless in extreme cases such as rape where it can be taken under the authority of a doctor or hospital superintendent.

The Department of Health recommends the drugs AZT and 3TC as part of PEP and suggest lopinavir/ritonavir may also be needed. Although the government has passed laws guaranteeing rape survivors free access to PEP, it is only available at government health facilities where ARVs are offered. This can make it difficult to access the services in time. The government must be pushed to make ARVs more available.

Under South African law, everyone must be offered the same treatment after sexual abuse. Sex workers as well as prisoners have the right to PEP treatment if appropriate. Health professionals and councillors are bound to strict confidentiality and can only tell of a patient's situation if given permission. Sexual abuse survivors should also be advised about pregnancy and other sexually transmitted infections. When dealing with medical staff they have the right to be treated with respect and given full information.

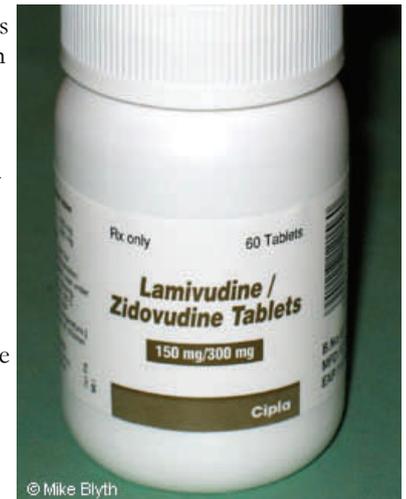
of your HIV test. Also get the rest of the medicines if you are HIV negative. If you think it will be impossible for you to come back to the doctor to get the rest of the medicines, remember to ask the doctor for all the medicines in the beginning.

If you test HIV negative, take the medicine for 28 days. Remember that the starter pack of 3 days' medicine will not protect you from HIV. You must take the full course for all 28 days or it will not work.

These medicines may have side effects like headaches, tiredness, skin rash, a running stomach, nausea and others. These side effects are usually not serious and will not last long. If the side effects are very unpleasant, go back to the doctor.

Have another HIV test after six weeks, three months and again after six months after the rape. It is very important for you to find out the results of your HIV test so that you can know your HIV status. If you test HIV negative each time, it means that you did not contract HIV from the rape.

(Source: Department of Health)



***A rape survivor does not need to lay a charge in order to receive treatment***

## PREVENTION CAMPAIGN: CONDOM DISTRIBUTIONS



The Ekurhuleni TAC Community Health Advocates team together with branch members distributed condoms in the townships as part of the prevention campaign. They went to informal settlements, hostels (Buyafuthi and Khwesine) and construction sites. While doing this they would explain the importance of using condoms in preventing new HIV transmissions and other sexually transmitted infections including how to use them.



## ***PLWHA REGIONAL MEETINGS & LEADERSHIP TRAININGS***



TAC Ekurhuleni PLWHA sector held several regional consultative meeting to empower people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) to ensure strong leadership and advocacy on health and human rights issues affecting all PLWHA's in the district communities.



## RESOURCES FOR HEALTH CAMPAIGN



The Prevention Treatment Literacy team played a vital role in collecting data in the clinics around Ekurhuleni as build-up on the research for the Resources for Health Campaign. Comrades mobilized people in different communities about the importance of holding government accountable for the drug shortages that were in the health centres.



## RESOURCES FOR HEALTH CAMPAIGN



Letting Go  
By Keamogetswe Mooketsi



**EKURHULENI  
POSITIVE TALK**

I am finally letting go  
Letting go of situations that do not benefit me  
Letting go of circumstances that do not benefit a Christian Woman  
I'm learning to embrace the free spirited creative woman I am  
Letting go of all the hurt, pain and resentment  
The anger, frustrations and sense of loss  
I embrace that I have risen above the dilemmas that have paralysed me in the past  
I'm letting go of wanting to make others see I'm worthy and wanting to show  
how much I care  
Wanting to explain myself or justifying my actions

Rather I sing, I laugh and dance  
I listen to my inner thoughts and respect my own opinion  
I'm letting go of those who don't deserve or appreciate me  
Yearning to be loved so much, that it's on terms that don't satisfy my being  
Thirsting for the attention so much, that I quench it with bitter words and twisted  
lies  
I'm learning to embrace my body, finely crafted and polished like a wooden statue  
I'm learning to hold on to the hope and to never lose faith that gold, just like roy-  
alty, should not be treated differently  
I'm letting go of suffocating in tiny, cluttered living spaces and hearts with no  
room to explore the free airy spaces of love instead, I look at the windows of my  
heart with delight  
I'm letting go of allowing my wild imagination be shattered into tiny particles,  
because of the sad realities of my experiences  
I'm learning to speak with a tact and say more than thoughts, but what I feel  
To show compassion to this masterpiece that carries my vitality  
I'm learning to grow, but mostly I'm growing more into me

**POWA**  
PEOPLE OPPOSING WOMEN ABUSE

*Call for Submissions*

People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) will now be accepting submissions for the 2009 POWA Women's writing Project. Submissions in the following categories will be accepted:

- Poetry; no longer than 60 lines
- Short story: no longer than 2 500 words
- Personal story: no longer than 2000 words

The theme for 2009 is "Untamed, unruly and immoral: Stories from the Other(ed) Woman"

All entries will be treated with respect and privacy .  
Therefore all entries should be sent to the following address:

Nehwoh Bellinda

People Opposing Women Abuse

Address: PO Box 93416, Yeoville 2143

Email: [Nehwoh@womenswriting.org.za](mailto:Nehwoh@womenswriting.org.za)

Deadline: Wednesday, 25 November 2009