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PRESS RELEASE: Major AIDS prevention initiative sees GPs equipped to perform circumcisions

14 March 2014 - General practitioners (GP's) in the private sector are being trained and equipped to perform medical male circumcisions as a key part of the government's HIV prevention strategy.

The programme is the result of a unique public-private partnership between provincial health departments, NGO's and Metropolitan Health Risk Management, which has provided a clinical surgical training team.

Research findings, including those from three large-scale, randomised controlled trials in South Africa, Uganda and Kenya, suggest that the relative risk of male-to-female transmission of HIV infection is up to 60% lower in circumcised men. Male circumcision has also been associated with a number of other health benefits. Although there are risks to male medical circumcision (MMC), serious complications from properly performed procedures are rare.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), UNAIDS and the SA Department of Health advocate MMC as an important strategy in the prevention of HIV infection in areas where HIV is transmitted primarily via heterosexual sexual intercourse.

The successful implementation of the MMC strategy with GP's requires a network of partnerships between government, NGOs and the private sector. Siraaj Adams, Executive Manager for the Metropolitan Health Risk Management HIV YourLife Programme, says; "We have an important role to play in supporting HIV prevention by empowering more primary healthcare providers to carry out this procedure".

The first pilot training sessions for the programme took place in Cape Town in September and in Johannesburg in October 2013, with more planned later in 2014.

The MMC training will be provided by an expert clinical trainer who has extensive practical skills combined with a specially-prepared manual on the procedure outline.