

Update to June 2006 internal UN briefing note on male circumcision and HIV

July 2006

The purpose of this update to the 9 June internal briefing note on male circumcision and HIV is to inform staff in the regional and country offices of WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank and the UNAIDS Secretariat on the status of two male circumcision trials in Uganda and Kenya.

On 28 June 2006, the US National Institutes of Health informed UN partners that the two ongoing trials which are examining the link between male circumcision and HIV acquisition in men will continue. The Data and Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) of the two trials met on 27 and 28 June 2006, examined interim results and decided to recommend continuation of the trials. The planned completion dates are July 2007 (Uganda) and September 2007 (Kenya), although there may be an additional review prior to then. The DSMB looked at safety, potential for bias in the randomisation procedures, risk behaviour in all study arms, loss to follow-up and numbers of visits completed, and determined that study conduct in both studies is proceeding as anticipated with no concerns. However, because it took time to enrol participants and they have not been followed very long, there are not yet many seroconversions. This means that additional person-years of follow-up are required for more certainty around the estimated effect of male circumcision.

The final results of the two ongoing trials will be important to clarify the relationship between male circumcision and HIV in a variety of social and cultural contexts. These results will help to determine the reproducibility and general applicability of the findings of the South Africa Orange Farm Intervention Trial reported in July 2005. A fourth trial examining the effects of male circumcision on HIV transmission to women is underway in Uganda and will also be completed in 2007. WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank and the UNAIDS Secretariat reaffirm their recommendation of July 2005 that although it is premature to recommend male circumcision services as part of HIV prevention programmes, countries should take steps to ensure that, if male circumcision is carried out, it be conducted by trained practitioners in safe and adequately equipped settings in order to reduce post-operative complications.

For more information, please contact

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