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PUBLICATION:	Egyptian Gazette
DATE:	13-December-2015
COUNTRY:	Egypt
CIRCULATION:	60,000
TITLE :	Innovative strategy to uproot HIV infections
PAGE:	05
ARTICLE TYPE:	NGO News
REPORTER:	Staff Report

Innovative strategy to uproot HIV infections

SOME 9,000 people are roughly estimated to have AIDS in Egypt. The known number, however, is 5,000 while, globally, there are 36.6 million patients.

Some 15.4 million of those are receiving treatment.

During a conference on "Towards New Horizons to Fight AIDS" held in Alexandria recently and organised by the Egyptian AIDS Society, Sawsan el Sheikh, Chairperson of the Society, said that there are plans to raise awareness of the disease in order to limit its spread.

She called on young people and different categories of society to have blood tests to detect the disease early. She stressed that it was possible to live with an AIDS infected person if he or she was receiving the right therapy.

She stressed, during the conference,

which marked World AIDS Day, the vital role the media played to raise awareness of how the HIV virus was transmitted. In addition, the media could contribute to removing the stigmatisation of those afflicted with the virus.

The UNAIDS programme, which is coordinated with governments, civil society and academic institutions as well as infected people carries out a strategy based on achieving zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

The UNAIDS 2016 - 2021 strategy aims at eradicating AIDS by 2030. It is one of the first in the United Nations system to be aligned to the sustainable development goals which set the framework for global development policy over the next 15 years, including ending AIDS by 2030, according to Dr



Sawsan el Sheikh

Ahmed Khamis, UNAIDS Programme Director in Egypt. Otherwise the programme aims for 90 per cent of those who live with HIV/AIDS to get the treatment, as only 15 per cent of this

category is currently getting the therapy. In addition it aims for the 90 per cent who live with the virus to enjoy life free from discrimination and it also seeks to overcome transmission of the infection from mother to the newborn completely, Dr Khamis said.

El Sheikh pointed to a project implemented by the Ministry of Health that provides medical services and social and psychological support for patients with HIV/AIDS. He said that there were places which refuse to treat people with the disease. In addition, many of those living with the virus suffer discrimination in housing and work.

The conference called for the allocation of a budget by the state to provide medications for patients, especially as there is a possibility that some countries which have been donating medicines may cease to do so.