

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

BY DR JAMES DOBSON

STOP HIDING FROM THE TRUTH

"Hide and seek" is a fun game for kids, but many adults play a hiding game that's really not much fun at all. I once saw a fascinating story in *The Seattle Times*. The headline read: "Sixty Years in Hiding for World War II Soldiers?"

Two former Japanese military men, then in their late-80s, had presumably been hiding in the remote mountains of the Philippines since 1945.

These two aren't the only World War II diehards. In the 1970s, Japanese soldiers emerged from jungles and caves on several different islands, after years of eating frogs and rats, and weaving clothes from tree bark. As astonishing as that sounds, I'm equally amazed to learn about the hidden lives of "respectable" people in my community, and in yours.

These are the same smiling faces that you see at work, at church, or in the supermarket. It's shocking to learn that they've been hiding an addiction, or a secret sin, a dysfunction; or they're involved in an affair. These secrets could eventually rip a family to shreds, or even lead to violence or suicide.

Tormented souls need not hide out in jungles and caves anymore. Help is available from counsellors and social workers, and there are some wonderful support groups out there. Of course, it will take courage to come out of hiding, but that's how healing begins.

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Singapore Limited
Founder: Dr James Dobson

voices

Review needed for Aids education

Four suggestions to improve prevention programmes here

Letter from
ASSOC PROF ROY CHAN
President, Action for Aids,
Singapore

WE REFER to the report, "Record HIV cases last year" (June 15). Action for Aids notes the increasing rate of HIV infection with concern and would like to reiterate our strategies to enhance prevention programmes in Singapore.

Firstly, there must be clear, unambiguous messages that include the consistent and correct use of condoms in educational campaigns. For too long, public education has skirted around the issue of safe sex.

While we have no problems with advice to have sex within marriages, it is inadequate if this is the only message – relegating the promotion of condom use to a back seat.

Shying away in embarrassment from dealing with youth



TODAY FILE PHOTO

Shying away in embarrassment from dealing with youth sexuality more directly is also jeopardising the health of our young citizens.

— Assoc Prof Roy Chan

sexuality more directly is also jeopardising the health of our young citizens.

The escalating rates of HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases are the result of this shortsighted approach. Action for Aids is appealing to the relevant authorities to review their educational programmes urgently.

Secondly, there must be universal access to treatment. Advocating testing without providing affordable and effective anti-retroviral medication is simply inadequate.

Majority of the infected persons cannot afford HIV medication. Many resort to seeking cheaper generic alternatives from Thailand and Malaysia. Some others do not receive treatment at all. Furthermore, supplies of generic drugs may be inconsistent and quality cannot be assured.

Action for Aids believes that providing even partially subsidised medication will contribute to effective HIV suppression, maximise clinical response to treatment and reduce infectiousness.

Thirdly, there should be a clear direction from our leaders on the issue of Aids-related stigma and discrimination. The prevalence of such prejudice has a negative impact on prevention programmes. Appropriate legislation to address this should be put in place.

Lastly, those who run a higher risk of infection must be empowered to take action and responsibility. In Singapore, men who have sex with men (MSM) are at the greatest risk of HIV infection, in my opinion.

To engage them, they must be encouraged to seek counselling and testing, and be given relevant and appropriate information. Barriers that stand in the way of these efforts should be removed.

In particular, we call for the urgent repeal of Sections 377 and 377A of the Penal Code that criminalise homosexual behaviour. These have been obstacles to targeted educational campaigns and our ability to reach out especially to young MSM who are the most vulnerable.

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