New era beckons for HIV patients

A new era for HIV care beckons as an organisation gets patients better care. These are the findings of HOPE Cape Town doctor and researcher Dr Jayne Cunningham.

“We have moved into a new era of HIV medicine where it is no longer just about getting people tested and onto treatment, but it is also all about retaining these patients in proper, successful care,” she says.

“An undetectable viral load is the ultimate goal that patients on ARVs should strive for.”

As stated in a recent press release from the organisation:

“To achieve success in the fight against the HIV epidemic, reporting and tracking HIV testing and treatment as success indicators are simply not good enough.

“We need to know how well HIV-positive people are actually doing. Currently, reaching and maintaining an ‘undetectable viral load’ is the closest thing we have to a cure for HIV.

“The best measure of whether HIV is being suppressed in an HIV-positive person’s body is a viral load test. Durable suppression of HIV helps HIV positive people stay alive and healthy while also helping prevent HIV transmission through sex, injecting drug use, and during pregnancy, labour and breastfeeding.”

HOPE Cape Town’s spokesperson, Fahim Docrat added:

“While most South Africans on ARVs will have a viral load test done, it is imperative that we explain to each patient what this means so that they have the correct information to manage and understand their HIV illness.

“Unfortunately not all countries providing ARVs are able to do routine viral load testing and this is something that we need to push for in order to offer proper care to all people taking ARVs. We have our work cut out for us if we are to achieve this by 2020.”

Community level

HOPE Cape Town is located at the Medical School of the University of Stellenbosch Tygerberg Campus and is a non-profit organization providing outreach, education and counselling at community level, focusing on HIV/AIDS and TB in the Western Cape.

HOPE Cape Town is linked to the University of Stellenbosch and cooperates with the department of Paediatrics and “KID-CRU” - the Tygerberg Hospital research unit for paediatric infectious diseases.

HOPE Cape Town began their work in 2001 with its mission to impact the communities they work in, and have been very successful to date. Having expanded their services to address the increasing need, they are now more reliant on the generosity of business and individuals to help fund their programmes.

To support HOPE Cape Town or find out more about the work they do, please contact Fahim Docrat on 021 9389339 or email fahim@hopecapetown.com or visit www.hopecapetown.com