

Gisenyi District Hospital in Rubavu has made significant progress in the fight against Hepatitis B and C. The hospital's success can be attributed to a powerful combination of education, increased testing, and readily available treatment.

Following the success of their awareness campaign, Gisenyi District Hospital initiated a comprehensive testing program. By May 31, 2024, they had screened 55,787 residents in Rubavu. This extensive testing effort identified 2,148 positive cases of Hepatitis C, and the hospital promptly provided medication to the 582 patients who required immediate treatment.

Dr. Oreste Tuganeyezu, Director General of the hospital explains the program's success: "Our campaigns found many people who didn't know they had Hepatitis. By offering free medication, educating the community, and making sure people get the treatment they need, we've been able to get many more people on the road to recovery."

"Initially, a big challenge was that many people didn't have the right information about Hepatitis. Some believed it could be treated with traditional medicines", Dr. Tuganeyezu clarified. "Hepatitis can be caused by excessive alcohol consumption, unsafe sex, or poor hygiene, but it's also caused by viruses. The good news is that most types of Hepatitis can be treated, especially if it's caught early", he added.

He also warned that Hepatitis can be very dangerous if it leads to cancer or other serious illnesses.

According to the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), a key government agency, Rwanda has made significant strides in ensuring treatment access. Medication for both Hepatitis B and C is now available at general hospitals and health centres throughout the country, ensuring that everyone can receive the treatment they need regardless of location.

Meanwhile, Gisenyi District Hospital continues to fight misconceptions by providing accurate information about Hepatitis. The hospital emphasizes that Hepatitis B and C are viral infections and that effective treatments are completely free.

Dr. Tuganeyezu stresses that the fight against Hepatitis isn't over. They plan to continue their education programs and partner with community health workers to reach even more people. Early detection and treatment are critical to long-term success.

The Director General reminds everyone that preventing Hepatitis B and C involves safe sex practices, which also helps prevent HIV/AIDS. He asserts that condoms are readily available at community health worker kiosks.

Additionally, he emphasizes that using sterilized equipment is essential. "People who suspect they might be infected should seek medical attention to see if they can be treated," he says.

Medical experts emphasize that practising safe sex with condoms prevents not only Hepatitis B and C but also a range of other sexually transmitted diseases (STIs).

One remaining challenge, according to Dr. Tuganeyezu, is that some young people hesitate to access condoms from community health workers in their villages or neighbourhoods. However, these health workers are there to provide essential services and information confidentially. "Overcoming this shyness is crucial for preventing the spread of Hepatitis and other sexually transmitted diseases," he adds.