



Equality
Rights Group GGR

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

No: 861/2013

Date: 28th November 2013

SEXUAL HEALTH TO BE PROMOTED

In a statement to the media issued jointly with the Equality Rights Group (ERG) and leading up to World AIDS Day on 1 December, Minister for Health John Cortes has declared that sexual health in the community will be promoted much more vigorously than in the past.

'HIV is a reality in the modern world with 27 HIV positives having been identified in Gibraltar in the ten year period from 2003 to 2013, including 17 in men and 10 in women.

"But sexual health in the community takes in much more than HIV and AIDS and includes a range of medical issues affecting people regardless of their age, gender or sexual orientation," said Dr Cortes. "A responsible community has to come to openly face the issue and work to overcome this very real situation. Whilst fuller information will be available once the GHA has converted to an electronic health record, it is the GHA's intention for the first time to routinely publish non-personalised statistics of sexually transmitted diseases, in order to maintain awareness of these."

On behalf of ERG, Felix Alvarez, the group's Chairman added that 'The first-time publication of these statistics is indeed a social and psychological ground breaker for Gibraltar – though we recognize they are currently limited and look forward to fuller information as the new electronic database eventually goes live. Putting an end to the taboo on open dialogue and information is an essential part of the way forward. The more we can talk about the realities, the better informed and effective our all-round efforts will be to offer the adequate support and back-up these medical issues deserve in a way which builds trust and confidence, not only in the health services themselves but also amongst the affected and in our society in general,' he ended.

The Minister and the ERG note the very positive work that is developing between the GHA and Equality Rights Group.