



Pollock spreads technique to save lives



Dr. Neil Pollock at the King Faisal Hospital in Kigali, Rwanda, instructing staff. The child pictured now has a significantly reduced chance of contracting the AIDS virus as an adult, according to studies conducted in Africa. *(added text)*



A Vancouver-based doctor says a 30-second surgery will help save millions in Africa from contracting AIDS.

Dr. Neil Pollock recently returned from Rwanda where he taught surgeons his “virtually bloodless, painless circumcision technique.”

“They told me they were using a 30-minute, versus my 30 seconds, procedure that involved a lot of bleeding and sutures,” says Pollock, who travelled to Africa in December with the BC Centre for Disease Control.

“AIDS is a huge problem, not only in Africa but worldwide, and we know that circumcision reduces the risk of AIDS transmission,” says Pollock.

It’s not 100 per cent effective, says Pollock.

“It doesn’t mean that you block all the windows and cracks ... but you remove a major portal of entry,” he says, which, “cuts the risk from

female to male [transmission of HIV] by 60 per cent.”

An estimated 1.9 million people were newly infected with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2007.

According to World Health Organization studies, three million lives could be saved, over the next 20 years, if all men in Sub-Saharan Africa were circumcised.

“It was the most meaningful week I’ve ever had in surgery,” says Pollock.

The Canadian Pediatric Society says there are some medical benefits, such as a slightly lower risk of urinary tract infections and STDs such as HIV, however they do not recommend routine circumcision.

Pollock, however, says since the procedure is not performed in hospitals, but in private practices, his statistics more reflectively show circumcision rates are in fact on the rise.