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## Doctor fights AIDS with circumcision

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**MEDICINE** | A Vancouver physician says that a quick and painless infant circumcision technique he pioneered here could become an important weapon in the fight against AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

Dr. Neil Pollock, who performs about 2,500 infant circumcisions annually in Metro Vancouver, travelled to Rwanda in December to teach his circumcision method to local surgeons.

Pollock described the Rwandan AIDS mission as the most “meaningful surgery” of his career.

“When an opportunity presents itself to be able to contribute in a way that can save tens of thousands of lives over the next few decades, it’s something you can’t turn down.”

AIDS experts believe that circumcision can stem the spread of the HIV virus in Africa through heterosexual sex, said Pollock.

“The foreskin is one of the main portals of entry into the body for the virus,” he added.

Research has shown that the transmission of HIV from women to men during sex can be reduced by 60 percent if the men are

circumcised.

Another study estimated that if all men in sub-Saharan Africa were circumcised, it would prevent almost six million new cases of HIV infection as well as save three million lives over the next 20 years.

Pollock taught his circumcision technique to two surgeons over four days in a hospital in the Rwandan capital city of Kigali.

“The idea was to get these surgeons trained to the level where they could disseminate the knowledge to other physicians after I left.”

Pollock is hopeful that the painless nature of his technique, which takes less than a minute to perform, will persuade many Rwandan parents to consider circumcision for their infants.

“We could have an exponential impact on the AIDS epidemic.”

