

## Grand Walk Marks World AIDS Day in AJK



میرپور۔ ڈسٹرکٹ ہیلتھ آفس اور آزاد جموں و کشمیر صحت دہانہ کے میڈیکل سوسائٹی نے جمعہ کو ایک آگاہی مارچ منعقد کیا۔

Published on December 1, 2025

Document Date: Sun, Jun 14 2026 02:02:28 am

Category: ,English,Kashmir - ~ ,Snippets

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MIRPUR (AJK): December 1st : An awareness walk was held under the auspices of the District Health Office here to mark the World AIDS Day, observed the world over including Pakistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir on Monday.

District Health Officer Dr. Fida Hussain Raja led the walk also participated by a large number of people from different segments of the civil society besides the state health department officers including Additional Principal Medical Officer Dr. Fatima Yaqoob, Additional District Health Officer CDC Dr. Nadeem Fazal Dad, Assistant District Health Officer Dadial Dr. Shumaila Karan, Assistant District Coordinator National Program Dr. Faria Javed, Disease Surveillance Officer Dr. Muhammad Junaid, Deputy Drug Controller Dr. Zaheer Iqbal, Health Education Officer Muhammad Aqeel, Assistant Director Muhammad Riaz, Assistant Director Sardar Muhammad Waqas, media representatives and other staff.

Addressing the participants on this occasion District Health Officer Dr. Fida Hussain Raja said that AIDS was a preventable disease and the most effective way to prevent it is to provide awareness and information to the public. He said that stigma, misconceptions and ignorance related to AIDS are still a major obstacle in controlling the disease, therefore, continuation of awareness campaigns at the community level is very important. He shed light on the global and national situation and said that according to the World Health Organization, 40.8 million people were living with HIV infection worldwide in 2024, while 1.3 million new cases were reported in the same year.

The number of AIDS deaths globally also stood at 630,000. The situation in Pakistan is also worrying, with more than 10,000 new cases reported in the country during the first 9 months of 2025, which is more than last year. According to national statistics, the prevalence of HIV in Pakistan has almost doubled in the last ten years and it was estimated that 3.5 to 4.8 lakh people in the country are living with this infection. However, access to treatment is very low and a large number of new cases are being detected incidentally during medical tests, which is proof that many people remain unaware of their disease.

District Health Officer Mirpur further said that it is a viral infection that destroys the immune system of the human body and even a minor infection proves fatal. The main reasons for its spread include unprotected sex, use of contaminated injections or syringes, unsafe blood transfusion and the possibility of transmission from mother to child during pregnancy or birth. Among its preventive measures, safe behavior, use of screened blood, sterile instruments, and timely diagnosis are very important. Dr. Fida Hussain appreciated the role of the media and said that the media is the most powerful tool to convey accurate and authentic information to the public and with its help, fear, stigma and misconceptions can be reduced in the society.

He said that awareness, diagnosis, treatment and social acceptance regarding HIV are the elements that play an important role in preventing the spread of the disease. He added that

although there is no complete cure for AIDS, it can be controlled through antiviral drugs if diagnosed on time. There are AIDS centers in Pakistan. In case of diagnosis, the patient should be treated instead of considering it as a stigma, which can not only control the disease. But it can also prevent it from spreading further.

District Health Officer Mirpur Dr. Fida Hussain expressed his determination on this occasion that these awareness efforts will be continued, awareness sessions will be increased at the community level through lady health workers and supervisors, safe medical practices will be strictly implemented and a dignified, compassionate and comfortable environment will be provided for HIV-infected people so that more people come for testing and treatment.

Sharing their input, the participants reiterated their commitment to continue playing their role in spreading the truth, awareness, and positive attitudes about AIDS in society.