

ROAD CARNAGE LINK WITH HIV-AIDS

Year after year, hundreds of people lose their lives on our roads and unfortunately this year seems to be no different.

We continue the sad tradition of funerals after the pleasure of families spending time together during the festive season. As you read this, almost 500 drivers and pedestrians have already breathed their last breath.

The consequences of our reckless and impatient driving, individually and collectively, is the cause of these despicable and unnecessary deaths.

Fortunately for the Arrive Alive campaigners, Transport Minister Jeff Radebe's head is never on the block.

Had he been in the volatile, forever controversial HIV-Aids fraternity, he would not have survived the number of calls for his resignation. He would have been called all sorts of unsavoury, demeaning and insulting names.

Upon passing an accident scene recently, a heated discussion took place among a group of my friends as one of them raised the burning issue of HIV-Aids and cited its symptoms as one the leading causes and contributing factors of the scourge on our roads.

"What has Aids got to do with road fatalities? You guys are pathetic and reckless in your thinking. Aids this, Aids that, it's silly," one of the guy's said as he released his frustration. He



was shocked out of his pants when I partially agreed that HIV and Aids do indeed, or might have something to do with this phenomenon.

My logic dictates, and it is corroborated indisputably by massive international research that indicate that HIV-Aids affects all spheres of our lives. In our country, there are six million people living with HIV and there is a sizeable number of people whose immune systems need a powerful recharge.

There are hundreds of thousands of people who have short concentration spells and who experience mood swings. Fatigue plays an important role in road accidents and it is one of the most common symptoms that people living with HIV experience.

What about excessive diarrhoea? I mean how many times can one cope, without losing balance, on a six hour trip from Durban to Johannesburg?

The anxiety, the pressure, the impatience, the panic and the unexpectedness of a possible leak in the middle of snail-paced traffic, in the company of bosom friends, family and children is very real. Imagine driving

behind an 18-wheeler truck when you are in a rush to get to the next service station for a heavenly relief. I promise you that that will be the very day, the hour, the moment that that truck will be driving extra slowly on a hilly road.

Can you imagine someone who has shingles? It is extremely itchy, uncomfortable and exceedingly painful.

How can anyone really cope with that type of situation while he is expected to comply with the rules and regulations of the road on the way?

How can one be expected to be compliant, patient and to adhere to a traffic officer's instructions whose only interest seems to be to supplement his meagre salary by enforcing the law. One could be silently screaming from the combination of some or all of those HIV-related symptoms.

At the end of the day, when all is said and done, most South African drivers have terrible driving habits.

If you don't believe me, just check out the parking lots at shopping malls and you will understand what I am talking about.

Generally, South Africans have a particularly rebellious attitude towards the law. We have a culture of rendering rules and regulations unenforceable.

Most regrettably, it takes lives – mostly innocent ones – for drivers to become wiser.