



Background

- Uganda national treatment guidelines recommend enhanced adherence counselling (EAC) to persistently non-suppressing persons with elevated viral load (VL) before a decision to change antiretroviral regimen due to treatment failure is made.
- Outcomes of this approach requires continuous assessment and reprogramming based on emerging results
- The PEPFAR funded URC-Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) provides technical support to 28 military health facilities in comprehensive HIV/AIDS care.
- We undertook an assessment to determine the proportion of and factors associated with persistent non suppression despite EAC procedures.

Methods

Retrospective review of patient files was conducted for all patients with high VL (≥ 1000 copies/ml) in 28 military run ART clinics between April 2018 and April 2019. Data on initial VL test results, EAC sessions, repeat VL test results, and documented barriers to adherence from a sampled group were abstracted for detailed analysis using logistic regression

Results

- 7.3% (1,433/20,001) patients had at least one VL > 1000 copies/ml over the period with average time on ART was 2.5 years. 168 with a high VL who completed the recommended 3 EAC sessions were sampled for detailed analysis.
- 41% (68/168) achieved viral re-suppression following EAC.
- Factors associated with re-suppression were: good adherence at 1st EAC (OR 0.3, $p 0.005$) while being less than 19 yrs (OR 2.5, $p 0.001$) was associated with persistent non-suppression.
- Barriers to adherence were lack of adequate food (25%); alcohol abuse (20%); other social problems (10%); transport barriers (10%) and stigma/disclosure challenges was reported by 8%.

Policy Implications

- EAC among non-suppressing persons achieved sub-optimal results and may not be sufficient to guide treatment failure management.
- Exploration of additional interventions beyond EAC is also recommended especially in the management of childhood treatment failure.

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