

COVID-19 Pandemics in Uganda led to Cessation of the Comprehensive HIV Program in Rural Areas of North Lake Victoria Region

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Original Article

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Source: *Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention*
Pages: 26 – 27

Volume: 12
Cited references: 2

Issue: 1

Reviewers:

Daria Kimuli
Catholic university of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, KE.
Jarmila Holkova
Malindi

Keywords:

Covid 19. HIV.

Publisher:

International Society of Applied Preventive Medicine i-gap

CSWHI 2021; 12(1): 26 – 27; DOI: 10.22359/cswghi_12_1_06 © Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention

Abstract:

15 years of sustainable activity in Buikwe and the rural area in Lugazi Province Republic of Uganda has led to a substantial decrease of HIV. However, this disease is still, together with malaria, the most important public health problem in the North Lake Victoria region. Unfortunately, arrival of Covid-19 led to a temporary decrease of outreach activity due to decreased mobility and restrictions. Therefore, the HIV epidemic may spread just due to the secondary effect of another epidemic diseases.

Introduction

HIV Malaria and TB still are major killers among diseases in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the arrival of Covid-19 may have an adverse effect on control of those three major public health problems due to funds consumed instead of e.g. HIV for Covid disease. In addition also non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes etc. are emerging events in rural Africa. 15 years of sustainable activity in Buika rural area in Lugazi Province Republic of Uganda has led to a substantial decrease of HIV. However, this disease is still, together with malaria, the most important public health problem in North Lake Victoria region. Unfortunately, arrival of Covid-19 led to temporary decrease of outreach activity due to decreased mobility and restrictions, therefore the HIV epidemic may spread just due to secondary effect of another epidemic diseases.

Patients and Methods

The capacity of the St. John Paul II Clinic of Health associates with an initiative HIA powered by the St. Elizabeth University Tropical Diseases Program serves two Outpatient Departments: with one for chronic diseases; one for incoming outpatients; both serving approximately 540 and 500 patients per month.

In addition, an anti-malnutrition program is active for 30 supports a month and TB therapy is included in comprehensive health services as well.

Four preventive programs in health care within the last year including spiritual assistance monthly is complemented by a social program for 579 households with 1,969 children.

Another 691 families received financial assistance or social support including of 625 those who received school support or educational support within the community.

Results and discussion

Spectrum of non-communicable and communicable diseases in Outpatient Departments serving approximately 500 patients monthly included the following diagnoses:

- sickle cell anemia 11%
- hypertension plus diabetes about 4%
- isolated diabetes 4%
- isolated hypertension 5%
- respiratory tract infections about 30%

- malaria 10%
- gastroenteritis 15%

Twice monthly HIV outreaches have been performed for 10 years leading to a decrease of HIV prevalence and also TB sporadicity, however since the Covid-19 alert in Uganda, this service has to be stopped.

Conclusions

A disease pandemic may adversely affect other diseases crucial for public health status in Sub-Saharan Africa such as screening for malaria, TB and HIV. Because the Covid-19 prevalence in rural African areas is lower than in the USA and Europe, hopefully the screening programs will be reopened to continue the everlasting battle against HIV, TB and other tropical diseases.

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