

THESIS ABSTRACT - TROPED WEBSITE

AUTHOR: Dr. med. Volker Westerbarkey, Medical Doctor

YEAR: 2011

THESIS TITLE: "To whom, when and why? Actual patterns of HIV disclosure in East-Central Uganda."

KEY WORDS: *HIV, Disclosure, Uganda*

SUPERVISOR: *Dr. med. H.W. Florian Neuhaus^a*

RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS: *^a Institute for Public Health, University Clinic Heidelberg*
Makerere Institute of Public Health, Kampala

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Ugandan HIV programme has shortcomings in the following areas: access to treatment, partner testing, safe sex behaviour and social support. All these areas are positively influenced by voluntary self-disclosure. Knowing actual disclosure patterns might help to identify factors to improve above areas.

METHODS

In 2008 and 2009 273 semi-structured interviews with HIV patients have been completed. Patients were chosen from the 5 ART providing health centres in Iganga District, East-Central Uganda. Participants were asked about socio-demographic indicators, HIV history, HIV disclosure and knowledge about ART. Proportions of disclosure, factors related to disclosure, disclosure reasons and disclosure timing were analyzed.

FINDINGS

The proportion of participants who disclosed to at least someone was (96.7%). Disclosure to the partner was at 83.9% and to the core family at 87.9%. Disclosure to someone outside the family was at 53.8% and 16.8% of the participants said they would potentially disclose to anyone.

Knowing the partner's HIV status was significantly correlated to disclosure to the partner or someone of the core family. Multivariate testing, however, identified no factor significantly related to disclosure to the partner or someone from the core

family. For disclosure to someone outside the core family or the partner, older age, longer duration of HIV infection and better knowledge about ART were significantly related.

The most cited reason to disclose was hope for assistance (80.8%). Fear of discrimination was the most frequent reason not to disclose further (56.8%). However, only 1.8% of the respondents said they actually had experienced discrimination.

The majority of patients disclosed for the first time within weeks after diagnosis (85.7%).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Disclosure to at least someone seems to be an established behaviour and not the central question regarding HIV disclosure anymore.

Despite of the high proportion of disclosure to the partner a significant number of participants, especially women, did not know the status of their partner. Regarding the increasing importance of HIV transmission within steady couples, this is an important area for improvement.

Disclosure proportions dropped from closer to more distant targets. For disclosure to closer targets relationship-related factors seemed more important, whereas for disclosure to more distant targets it was disease-related factors.

The main reason to disclose was hoping to get assistance. The low level of experienced discrimination did not explain the common fear of discrimination. A high level of internalized stigma can therefore be assumed.

First disclosure is generally not delayed as it happens mostly within the first weeks after diagnosis.

Main limitations of the study were the unrepresentative high proportion of patients on ART, of urban participants and of Muslims within the study sample, which might have influenced the results.