My Virus, My Healthcare: Perspectives of sub-Saharan African Migrant Women with HIV/AIDS on Treatment and Care in Belgium

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Introduction

❖ Belgian national health insurance ensures universal coverage to HIV/AIDS patients
❖ ART reduces HIV/AIDS from spreading
❖ ART enhances positive living
❖ Tailored treatment and care restores self-dignity
❖ ART decreases the number of motherless children
❖ ART makes motherhood possible for many

Method

❖ Design: qualitative study with semi-structured face-to-face interviews and observations during consultations
❖ Participants: 22 participants recruited from AIDS Reference Centers (ARC)
❖ Eligibility criteria: > 18 years, SSA female descent, diagnosed HIV+ > 3 months, French or English speaking, on treatment in Belgium
❖ Procedure: patient was invited to participate by the treating physician.
❖ Analysis: Thematic content analysis

Results: Participant characteristics n=22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>23-66 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years living with HIV (range)</td>
<td>4-27 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No intimate partner</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have intimate partner</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Living with intimate partner</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not living with intimate partner</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have children</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No child</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pregnant after HIV diagnosis</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate partner status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HIV positive</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HIV negative</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Antiretroviral therapy

❖ On treatment: 21
❖ Not on treatment: 1

Education

❖ University/Higher: 12
❖ Primary/secondary: 9
❖ None: 1

Mode of transmission

❖ Heterosexual: 21
❖ Homosexual: 0
❖ Work-related: 1

Results: Perspectives/reality

What women think
❖ Treatment and modern healthcare services
❖ Treatment restores self-dignity, improves self-image
❖ Continuation of mothering and caregiver role
❖ Fosters HIV prevention and good sexual health

What really happens
❖ Healthcare cost significantly covered by the national health insurance
❖ Patients unaware of real cost of ART
❖ Legal status determines access to treatment and care accepted in emergency
❖ HIV-related stigma impedes treatment adherence

Quote

“I live well with HIV/AIDS. I support and adhere to my treatment” (P 49 years old)

Policy Implications

❖ For sustainable prevention purposes legal status of HIV/AIDS patients should cease to be treatment criteria
❖ To get zero HIV/AIDS generation HIV prevention strategies should be redesigned and tailored to fit each group in its cultural setting.

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