

Assessment of School-based HIV Programs Aimed at Optimizing HIV Care and ART Adherence in Kisii County Kenya

Jaqueline N. M & Betsy. W.

Department of Health Sciences, Maasai Mara University, Kenya

naulikha@mmarau.ac.ke

Abstract

In Sub-Saharan Africa, there were an estimated 3.0 million children living with HIV in 2018 and there were about 200,000 HIV-infected children in Kenya alone. Achieving viral suppression and good health outcomes depends on maintaining a high level of adherence to ART to maximize clinical effectiveness and limit potential for development of drug resistance.³ Maintaining high-level ART adherence in children in resource-poor settings and preventing drug resistance is especially important because only two lines of ART are available. HIV-infected children face several potential barriers to ART adherence, as adherence is a complex behavior and is affected by many factors, including developmental stage, knowledge of HIV status, health and nutrition, caregiver characteristics, and sociocultural characteristics. However, the role schools play in influencing ART adherence and health outcomes in HIV-infected children is poorly understood. Given the fact that children spend a significant amount of time in schools, the social environment and support systems in schools, or lack thereof, have the potential to have a significant effect on pediatric ART adherence and health outcomes. Thus, the role schools play in providing support to HIV-infected children must be examined. Policies and guidelines established by the Kenyan Ministry of Health (MOH) mandate that schools fulfill certain responsibilities related to HIV, including providing information on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in their curriculum. With respect to HIV-infected children, the only requirements set by the MOH are that schools promote peer support and HIV/AIDS counseling through trained counselors and facilitate access to ART. These requirements are relatively broad and leave schools. A school-based assessment done in Kisii County, revealed, that there is need to optimize HIV care and ART in School going children.

Key words: School, HIV, Care