

Barriers and Facilitators of Retention in HIV Care among Patients Attending Antiretroviral Clinic in UPTH: A Qualitative Study

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Background: *Antiretroviral treatment can prolong and improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. Attrition from HIV care could reduce the chances of survival and increase the chances of developing AIDS opportunistic infection as well as the development of viral resistance strains to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART). The study was aimed at identifying the barriers to HIV treatment and the motivating factors that could keep HIV patients in continuous care and support (USAID, 2014).*

Methods: *A qualitative research through focus group discussion was conducted amongst HIV positive patients who had remained in care for ten years and more, at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH) to understand the challenges and the motivators that have kept them in continuous care. Also, key informant interviews was conducted with the doctor and matron in charge of ARV clinic to identify the challenges with HIV management. The Data was subjected to content analysis.*

Results: *The barriers to effective ART service delivery included perceived stigmatization by healthcare workers, ancillary treatment cost, travel distance to UPTH, waiting time to receive care, forgetfulness to take medication, lack of counseling materials, and a non-flexible patient work schedules. The motivating factors that have kept patients in continued care included; desire to live, being in a good state of health, love for family members and clinical counselling sessions.*

Discussion: *These barriers of identified in this study were similar to the findings of Adedimeji et al (2012), Yehia et al (2015) and Saleh et al (2015). This could lead to the loss of HIV patients along the care continuum, thereby increasing the rate at which the virus could spread from one person to another.*

Conclusion: *HIV patients are still facing a lot of challenges that could affect their continued retention in care. A well-structured patient-oriented counselling services should be further enhanced, while enlisting family*

members as treatment supporters to improve the retention of HIV patients undergoing antiretroviral treatment.

Key words: *Antiretroviral therapy, Retention in care*

Conflict of interest: Authors declare that there are no conflict of interest.

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