

Adherence to antiretroviral therapy and its challenges in people living with HIV and accessing healthcare in a federal medical centre in Nigeria

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Adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART) among people living with HIV is pivotal in reducing viral transmission, preventing the emergence of drug resistant viral strains and improving the life expectancy of these people. A base line survey of the level of adherence to ART and its challenges was carried out among adults accessing this healthcare service at a Federal Medical Centre in Nigeria. Two hundred and fifty patients were recruited for this facility based cross-sectional study. Patients ≥ 18 years who consented to participate were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. The level of adherence in this cohort was 62.8%. It was found to be higher in patients whose spouses knew their HIV status (47.9%), were living with their families (61.7%), and among those that used an alarm to remind themselves to take their medication (50.5%). However, common reasons for non-adherence were found to be: forgetfulness (51.5%), avoiding the drug side effect (14.5%), living far away from the Medical Centre (8.1%) and inability to afford the cost of transportation to the Medical Centre (6.5%). Patient's educational level, marital status and occupation were found to be significantly associated with adherence to antiretroviral therapy in this cohort ($p \leq 0.05$). Adherence was poor in this study population. The decentralization of ART services to primary healthcare facilities and the reintensification of patients' education and counseling is advocated.

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