



**Stigma related factors and
patients' compliance on ART:
Listening to the voices of the
health care providers in Tanzania**

Edith Tarimo, John George

**Department of Nursing Management,
Muhimbili University of Health and Allied
Sciences (MUHAS)**

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Objectives



- To explore effect of stigma on ART compliance among patients as perceived by health care providers (HCPs)



Methods



- Focus group discussions were conducted among HCPs at 3 care and treatment centres (CTCs) located in 1 regional hospital and 2 referral hospitals.
- 33 HCPs: 8 doctors, 17 nurse-counsellors; 3 pharmacists; 3 laboratory technologists; and 2 social workers participated
- Analysis followed thematic content approach



Results (1)



- Physical set up of CTCs were perceived by HCPs as friendly yet violated confidentiality
- Patients hid identifiable blue cards to avoid being recognised by others at the clinic
- Dosage instructions on ART manufacturers' box were thrown away.
- This resulted to overdose contrary to the prescriptions



Results (2)



- Patients shifted from their primary clinic to avoid familiar faces of patients and staff
- During relocation they missed doses
- Patients did not disclose their status at the other CTCs and therefore they repeated tests of HIV and ART initiation
- Patients escaped doctors whom they knew, sometimes changed the visiting schedule and attend clinic after working hours



Discussion & Conclusions



- The findings indicate simple interventions could have great impact on ART compliance
- However, there are challenges such as:
 - How can we use alternative cards given that we have coloured cards for other conditions? eg. TB, Leprosy
 - How can we make clients concentrate on instructions given that they are looking back and forth to avoid those whom they know?
- Perhaps, regular education sessions are important during each visit at the CTCs



Future perspectives



- Stigma is a discrediting attribute possessed by a person with undesired difference but proper counselling can halt this feeling.
- The findings call for clinic staff to promote and increase awareness of HIV and ART related issues
- Patients' education on ART compliance and adherence can make a tremendous change in their perceptions