
Risk and infection control in community and home-based care for people living with HIV/AIDS in the informal settlements of Durban South Africa

Chanelle Mulopo*, Supervisor: Dr. Olagoke Akintola
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Background

There is a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Many hospitals cannot cope with the demands of HIV related diseases, hence the ministry of health has adopted a policy on Home-based care, where patients living with HIV/AIDS are being taken care of at home.

Objective

This research aims to assess the rate of infection control in home-based care.

Methodology

A qualitative study was conducted in three informal settlements in Durban. Five focus group discussions with a total of 49 community health workers who care for HIV/AIDS clients were conducted. In addition five project managers/founders of the Home-based care organizations were interviewed. An ethnographic orientation of participant observation was also included.

Findings

Water was found to be scarce in these communities. Participants experienced unreliable water supply and had inadequate amounts of water. This made it difficult for community health workers to maintain hygiene in households of people living with HIV/AIDS and also to keep the patients clean. Unhygienic home environment posed a risk of infectious diseases to the HIV/AIDS patients. Limited amounts of water also meant that toilets could not be cleaned properly with water. As a result community health workers improvised by sprinkling detergents to get rid of the bad odors from the toilets. Majority of the community members used pit-latrines, and these were found to be in poor condition with no proper doors, fly screen or a roof. Flies around the toilets posed a risk of infection transmission. Community health workers were also found to be at risk of contracting infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS due to a lack of protective equipment such as masks, gloves and aprons in home-based care.

Conclusion/recommendation

Water is necessary and crucial for infection control in community and home-based care. There is need for the government to respond promptly to the water and sanitation needs in informal settlements. Findings from this study can be used to inform policy on water and sanitation in community and home-based care.

Key words

Risk, Infection Control, Home and Community-based care, HIV/AIDS, Informal Settlements