

Developing tools for Mentor Mothers to support effective education and counselling to reduce HIV, Syphilis and Hepatitis B transmission from mother to baby in PNG.

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Background/Purpose:

Papua New Guinea has the highest HIV incidence in the Pacific Region, estimated at 72,000 PLHIV (UNAIDS, 2023) and vertical transmission of HIV is approximately 34%. Contributing to this, antenatal care (ANC) coverage of at least 1 ANC visit is 42% (PNG national HIV estimate (NDoH), 2023). While there have been early initiatives focused on preventing vertical transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B (HBV), in 2023 33% of pregnant women attending ANC were tested for HIV. Low rates of antenatal attendance and high rates of unsupervised deliveries further impact Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (EMTCT).

The Mentor Mothers Program is designed to promote and support ANC attendance, screening, testing and treatment of HIV and syphilis during pregnancy and to encourage women to have a supervised delivery. The role of mentor mother after delivery is important for ongoing treatment adherence, counseling and follow-up.

Approach:

Working with health care providers and women living with HIV, we developed an IEC toolkit. The toolkit comprises of guides, training materials and activities that Mentor Mothers (HIV Peer workers) can utilize to support community engagement and ANC education to explain the importance of early and regular ANC attendance, screening, testing for HIV and syphilis and treatment adherence during pregnancy to prevent vertical transmission, along with other information to support a healthy pregnancy, delivery and baby.

Outcome/Impact:

Involving Mentor Mothers and health workers in the design of the toolkit ensures the information shared is factually correct, consistent and in line with current policies and practices in PNG. It also ensures the toolkit is culturally sensitive information which is easy to understand and share.

Innovation and Significance:

The toolkit's development has been locally led and is owned by PNG NDoH. Similar toolkits have been implemented to support HIV peer counselling in PNG with some success and it's hoped using a similar approach will have similar uptake and impact.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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