

Could a team in different disciplines provide high quality care for HIV-infected drug users?

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Issues: HIV-infected drug users (HDUs) found no meaning of life thus offered no initiative to seek follow-up for HIV management. They were found difficult to trace for medical consultation. Could HIV Clinic nurses achieve dual roles of helping HDUs to maintain their health and preventing HIV transmission in the community?

Description: A collaborative programme was set up. HIV Clinic nurses partnered with medical social workers (MSW) of Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA) of Methadone Clinics (MC) to jointly manage HDUs – chronic drug abuse treatment/ rehabilitation and HIV care. Services provided in the HIV Clinic/ MCs included counselling, psychosocial rehabilitation, home/ outreach visit to fulfill basic needs, give practical advice in order to help them live a 'normal' life. The prime task was to encourage follow-up at the HIV Clinic. This would allow nurses to develop rapport with them such that self-care knowledge could be provided and exploration of own resources could be encouraged.

Lessons learned: The information exchange between SARDA MSWs and Clinic nurses enabled formulation of intact case management plans to meet HDUs' needs and facilitated effective counselling. HDUs were receptive to HIV treatment and public health interventions. As they regained meaning of life, they managed to lead a more organised living and reduce drug use/ needles sharing. The interdisciplinary HIV team comprising doctors, psychiatrists, nurses and clinic MSWs, worked very closely to empower HDUs. Regular meetings with SARDA were held to aim at shared provision of high quality care.

Conclusions: The collaborative programme was effective as a low defaulted follow-up rate by yearly statistics was demonstrated, and HDUs maintained their integrity and healthful functioning through regular counselling and psychosocial questionnaires as well as risk behavioural assessment. With the cooperation of different disciplines, the goal of tracking down HDUs for treatment and care was attained, so interdisciplinary healthcare has come into prominence in HIV clinic.