



Comprehensive HIV Care During Covid-19 in Harare, Zimbabwe

MMS Symposium 2021

Wednesday 3rd Zimbabwe
November 2021



Newlands
Clinic

Outline of the Presentation

- Introduction to Newlands Clinic
- The Covid-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe
- Strategies for the provision of HIV care services
- Challenges
- Successes
- Lessons learned

Geographic Location of Zimbabwe



The Newlands Clinic

- Newlands Clinic: outpatient, urban, HIV treatment facility run by Ruedi Luethy Foundation
- 7200 PLHIV from vulnerable communities receive care
- Comprehensive care:
 - ❖ Diagnosis & treatment of opportunistic infections
 - ❖ HIV treatment & monitoring
 - ❖ On-site lab & pharmacy
 - ❖ Mental & social health department
 - ❖ Sexual reproductive health services
 - ❖ Dental Services



The Covid-19 Pandemic in Zimbabwe

- The 1st wave of Covid-19 occurred in March 2020 followed by a 2nd wave in December & 3rd wave in June 2021
- Imposition of government-imposed “lockdowns” - travel restrictions & closure of non-essential services
- Vaccination rollout commenced in March 2021
- October 2021: > 130 000 cases, 4700 deaths (96% recovery rate), daily cases are ~ 50, > 2 500 000 people fully vaccinated

Strategies for the Provision of HIV Care During Covid-19

Care for Healthcare Workers

- Formulation of SOPs (patients & staff)
- Training & PPE procurement for staff
- Medical support for staff: counselling, testing, home visits, home oxygen, facilitation of hospital admission
- Cessation of high-risk procedures e.g. dental services
- Vaccination



Strategies for the Provision of HIV care During Covid-19

Patient Care

- Triage desk – symptom screening, T⁰
- Covid-19 suspects fast-tracked
- Quick TAT for patient visits, MMD, essential laboratory tests
- Nutritional support
- Telephonic counselling, social media platforms
- Vaccination



Challenges

- Travel restrictions for patients & HCWs
- Patient fears – Covid-19, law enforcement agencies
- Disruption of services at referral hospitals due to the diversion of limited resources into Covid-19 care (especially HCWs)
- Interruption of ART supplies & other medications
- Difficulty in procurement of laboratory reagents & consumables
- Restricted community tracing of patients

Successes

- Patient reports - finding HIV services operational was a positive experience
- Mitigation of the psychosocial impact of Covid-19 through the maintenance of mental & social health & nutritional support services
- HIV viral suppression rates remained > 90% in the adult cohort

Lessons Learned

- Adaptation of the health service is possible
- Caring for the HCW, providing platforms for training, discussion & counselling are crucial
- Maintaining comprehensive, holistic HIV care in an acceptable, safe, effective manner is essential & should be done in partnership with the patients
- Further identification of vulnerable groups & their specific needs during a health crisis is important

Thank you for listening!