VIRAL LOAD SUPPRESSION IN PORT VICTORIA HOSPITAL AMONG CHILDREN AGED 2 – 9 YEARS

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BACKGROUND

HIV is a serious public health concern that continues to have high morbidities and mortalities especially in sub –Saharan Africa. Strategies to achieve at least 90 % viral load suppression have been recommended by the WHO. Intensified facility linkage and viral testing after every six months and enhanced community participation can help to achieve the national suppression targets. This study assessed the effects of using a 2 – pronged approach at the health facility and the community level on the viral load suppression among children 2-9 years.

METHODS

This was a 6 – month’s pre and post intervention study among 2-9 years between January and December 2017. A two – pronged intervention involved sensitizing health workers on 6-monthly viral load testing, line listing, linkage of all children due for testing to testing centers, health talks and counseling on the importance of taking and adherence to ART drugs and intensified community empowerment through defaulter tracing and referrals from CHVs. Proportions for viral load suppression and the means in the pre and post period were calculated and expressed as percentages.

RESULTS

A total of 58 and 39 children aged 2-9 years in the Comprehensive Care Clinic were included in the study for the pre and post periods respectively. There was an 11% increase in the viral load suppression rate from 65.5% to 76.9% in the post period. Children headed families, delay in seeking care and dependency on parents were the common challenges affecting suppression among children.

CONCLUSION

Continuous sensitization of health workers, intensive defaulter tracings, community empowerment and monitoring has the potential to contribute to an increase in the viral load suppression.