

Collaboration with Primary Healthcare Network Significantly Improves Retention in Care and Viral Load Suppression in Ukraine

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Background

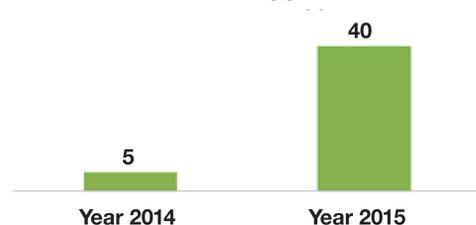
Decentralization of HIV care is known to be one of the key conditions for successful patient management. The HIV clinic in Voznesensk, established in 2010, has provided HIV care and support to more than 500 patients living in the area of 537 square miles in the center of the Mykolaiv Region of Ukraine, where half of the population live in rural conditions. In 2013, only 60% of patients were on ART and 25% of patients were virally suppressed.

Methods

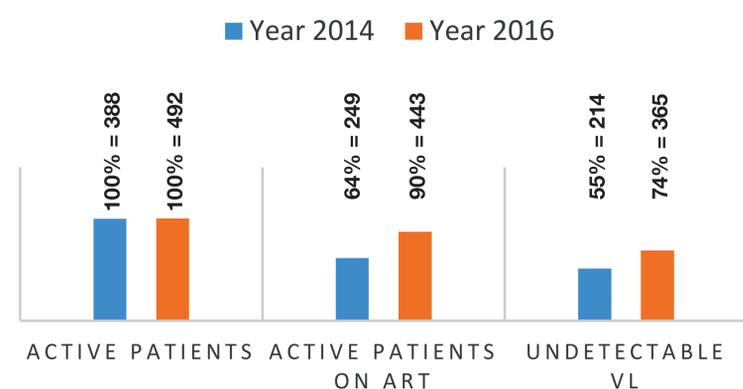
In order to improve performance, in 2014 AHF suggested a plan to address poor patient retention. Collaboration with primary healthcare (PHC) network was initiated. Clinic staff conducted a series of educational trainings on medical and psychosocial aspects and counselling for PHC providers (doctors, nurses, feldshers) working in the Voznesensk area.

Additionally, from November 2014, patients were reminded about appointments through an SMS. If a client missed an appointment, the social worker called him/her several times within a week after the missed appointment. If this wasn't successful, the social worker contacted the patient's GP or feldsher who visited this patient in his/her house and provided adherence counselling.

% of clients returned into care within 1 month after missed appointment



VOZNESENSK CASCADE OF CARE



Results

In 2014 before this model of collaboration was in place only 5% (4) of clients who missed their appointment returned to HIV care within a month, while in 2016 this number increased to 40% (36). The number of patients on antiretroviral therapy increased from 64% (249) to 90% (443), viral load suppression increased from 55% (214) in 2014 to 74% (365) in 2016.

Among those patients who have been on ART for more than 6 months, the proportion of patients who achieved viral load suppression reached 82%.

Conclusions

Collaboration between HIV clinics with a PHC network in rural areas in Ukraine demonstrates the potential to:

- Effectively increase patient retention
- Increase the number of patients on ART
- Increase the number of patient who achieve viral suppression
- Decrease physical and/or perceived barriers to accessing care



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