

A qualitative review of psychosocial support for young people living with HIV

Geneva: WHO, 2009. 40 p.

Organizations:

WHO

Description:

The increasing effectiveness and availability of highly active antiretroviral treatment (HAART) during the past decade has resulted in the survival into adolescence of thousands of children born with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) who would otherwise have died in childhood. At the same time, despite growing awareness about effective interventions to prevent HIV transmission among young people, they still make up 45% of new transmissions worldwide. Whether infected during the neonatal period or during adolescence, young people living with HIV (YPLHIV) have unique and pressing psychosocial needs on top of the daily challenges of being an adolescent. In the absence of empirical data, and confronted by a disease whose implications change constantly, this review explores the interventions that organizations are implementing around the world to provide psychosocial support for YPLHIV and synthesizes their recommendations for future interventions. When comparing young people from different parts of the world, in different age groups and with different modes of acquisition, the results of the review indicate that there appears to be far more consistency than disparity in terms of their problems and needs. Adherence to medication, disclosure of HIV status, issues relating to sex and lack of support networks are problems faced by all YPLHIV. The majority of organizations use a multidisciplinary team of individuals to meet these needs, with particular emphasis on individual and group therapy, educational support, and skillsbuilding programmes. The review stresses the importance of youth-centred and youth-led approaches that engage young people in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes. Respondents underlined the need for increased funding, capacity building and trained staff. They suggest that policy-makers put more effort into understanding the distinctiveness of adolescence, particularly in the context of HIV, and challenge them to make longer-term commitments to funding and programme support. Lastly, respondents argue that in order for their organizations to provide better services, they need further evidence of effective solutions, programme guidance and support tools, and increased collaboration and communication with one another and with policy-makers and funders.

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