

Child-friendly Corner increased pediatric HIV treatment initiation and retention at St Martin de Porres Hospital Center Region of Cameroon.

Introduction

In most African countries, the gap between adult Care and Treatment (C&T) and pediatric care has been increasingly wide with little measures taken to link and retain HIV+ children in care. By 2013, Cameroon had 94,000 CLHIV; with only 6% of HIV+ children receiving ART against 25% for adults (UNAIDS 2013).

It thus became imperative to make more investments to sustain efforts and ensure that no child dies again of AIDS.

In response, CBCHB won a CDC/PEPFAR award to implement the Accelerated Children Treatment (ACT) Initiative with objective to double the number of children receiving life-saving ART. This funding has enabled the CBCHB begin implementing an innovative Child-Friendly Corner initiative which is now greatly and positively affecting pediatric HIV.

CBCHB Child-Friendly Corners

A Child-Friendly Corner is a protected space where a child feels both physically and emotionally secure and at ease. Besides being a space where health services are provided, it serves as a place where children participate in activities to play, socialize, learn and build resilience. Such an environment helps to reduce fear, anxiety and distress often associated with HIV clinic visits. In having positive associations with HIV clinics, children are more likely to adhere to their ART regimen, and return to the clinic for scheduled appointments.

Challenges faced by St Martin de Porres in providing Pediatric HIV treatment.

St Martin the Porres is one of the C&T centers of the center Region approved by the Ministry of public health. This center had over the years initiated both adults and children on treatment but allowed them to attend same clinic on same days. It did not dawn on the hospital administration that children are not small adults and so the way services were delivered did not quite meet their psychosocial needs. For instance, the seats at the center were adult oriented and the children lacked satisfaction being in such an environment and rather wondered why they should be brought to the hospital regularly when they were not sick. Identifying the needs of the children was difficult as their information was mixed up with those of adults.

The Chief Medical Officer testifies:

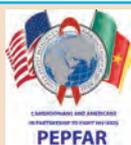
"It was not easy to quickly know the how many children we had in our center especially disaggregated into the different age groups since the record of the children were not being properly kept"

CBCHB Intervention

St. Martin de Porres was one of the facilities CBCHB assessed for and found that they needed support to better implement pediatric



Pre-teen age group (6 – 12 yrs) in session, singing during child friendly corner activities



Child-friendly Corner

By Esther Kuni, October, 2016

care and treatment centers in the center Region. A Child-Friendly center was then created at a designated corner for the children and some renovation with attractive drawings on the walls to provide a more relaxing, secure and comfortable environment. The drawings on the walls inspire them to communicate vivid images of daily happenings in their personal lives that enable counselors to understand what personal issues they have to deal with.

they discovered much fun at the hospital. The day of the official opening of the center in June was the peak of their joy. The hospital administration and Parents/Guardians expressed their gratitude to the funders for this great consideration through CBCHB.

Little Yasmine expressing her happiness for the play corner through a poem.

Yasmine is a seven year old kid, enrolled at the St. Martin de Porres center. After showing up for a couple of appointments at the child-friendly corner, she says this about the initiative:



Little Yasmine expressing her happiness for the play corner through a poem.

“Medication, good feeding habits and good hygienic practices are a key to a healthy life. Though we are bound to take medications every day, we do it with joy. Respecting the instructions given by our doctors and reminding our parents not to forget our follow up visits. By working closely with our doctors, with the support of the partners to the ministry of health, we will overcome

Also, playing toys, children games and story books were provided to encourage activities for the children that are interesting so as to release their fears or discomfort of being in a hospital environment.

illnesses, live healthy lives and make proud leaders as we are the Cameroon of tomorrow”

The result has been that children enjoy being at the facility, thus reducing the chances of treatment default. Those whose parents forget their appointments, quickly remember as they are eager to make their next appointment at the center and some even attempt coming on their own. More so, a television set was provided to project TV shows that entertain, educate as well as edify the children to be in moral right standing at all times.

The initiative of a Child-friendly corner is currently influencing pediatric care and treatment uptake, adherence and retention at St Martin de Porreas seen below. This is how the CBCHB has been impacting the lives of children through the PEPFAR funded ACT initiatives by setting up Child Friendly Corners in treatment centers where children are initiated on treatment and where drug refills take place. The initiative is now being used at a total of 36 C&T centers in the Northwest, Southwest, Center and Littoral and it is proving effective in ensuring treatment retention in children.

Children were excited during one visit when

June= 22

July= 28

August= 35

September=44

Monthly attendance at the child friendly corner from June to September, 2016

