

Improving early infant diagnosis for HIV exposed babies at College Health Post, Kasama District, Northern Province, Zambia

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Introduction

Early infant diagnosis is HIV testing of babies born from HIV positive mothers which is done from birth up to 2 yrs. It increases anti-retroviral therapy initiation, which reduces pediatric HIV-related morbidity and mortality. Kasama recorded 567 exposed infants in 2023 and College health has a total number of 510 clients currently on ART as on July 2024. The facility recorded 78 exposed babies and only 28% of HIV new borns were tested for between Q4 2021 and Q4 2023 which is against national Target of 95%.

Methods

Retrospective analysis of routinely collected data from the Zambian smart care data base was performed for the period January 2023 to June 2024. The study population includes all HIV-infected infants (N=122) and why tree was used to identify the root causes of problem and prioritization matrix were selected as follows; Lack of orientation on correct data entry, Inconsistent in disseminating information to mothers, Inadequate orientation on EID to staff members, not enough courier operators, Testing kits not in stock. Interventions that were implemented are; technical support on proper data capturing, order baby mother pair register, IEC on testing schedules and

its importance, List of exposed babies was generated from the smart care, Staff members from all Facility entry points are involved in identification of Hiv exposed children due for testing, Routine schedule for sample collection and following up results from the laboratory, Ordering of testing kits (DBS) from DHO and partners (RTC).

Results

In 2023, the facility recorded 72 exposed babies and only 21 were tested for HIV at all intervals and in 2024, the facility recorded 122 babies who were exposed, and 78 were tested for HIV at all intervals. The facility has recorded an increase in early infant diagnosis from 28% in Q2 2023 63% by the end of Q2 2024.

Conclusion

College Health Post has shown an increase in early infant diagnosis of HIV exposed babies in the period 2023 to 2024. This period coincided with the implementation of QI interventions, which were innovatively designed worked i.e. offering technical support on data capturing to all staff members and educating mothers on the different testing schedules and their importance. In settings where EID services are well functioning, there is a likelihood of

improving pediatric HIV outcomes. An effective EID service should achieve the following: identify all HIV-exposed infants, provide HIV testing and ensure the return of results in a timely manner; retain HIV-exposed infants and their mothers in care; and identify all HIV-infected infants and link them to treatment services to ensure timely initiation of ART.