

Experiences of HIV positive patients on ARV treatment at the Thulamela municipality in the Vhembe district of Limpopo province, South Africa

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Antiretroviral treatment (ARV) has improved the quality of life among people living with HIV. ARVs have been documented to decrease the morbidity and mortality of people in their introduction in the late 1980's. The purpose of the study is to identify, explore and describe the experiences of HIV positive patients on ARV treatment at the Thulamela municipality in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, South Africa. A non-probability purposive sampling was used. The target population was those HIV positive patients on ARV treatment who were eighteen years and above. A qualitative research method was used to explore and describe the experiences of HIV positive patients on ARVs in detail. In-depth individual interviews were used through the help of interview guide for data collection. The open coding method was used for data analysis. Six themes emanated from the study as presented underneath; each theme consists of sub-themes:

- Dominant tales of perceived family support for HIV positive relative resulting in feelings of despair and those of being accepted
- Stigma and discrimination related to HIV positive diagnosis
- Participants' experiences while on ARTs
- Knowledge related to HIV disease process
- Disclosure of HIV positive status, and
- Healthcare providers' practices in the ART clinic

Community involvement and participation in HIV/AIDS matters is of utmost importance to reduce stigma and discrimination and bring unity in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Government should continually carry out workshops on families and relatives of those who are affected and make awareness campaigns to the community at large.

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