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Detecting non-adherence to antenatal antiretroviral therapy in primary health care facilities with limited resources

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Introduction & Objective: Tanzania is implementing ARV triple therapy for life; Zidovudine+Lamivudine +Nevirapine / Nelfinavir among pregnant women with HIV to prevent transmission from mother to child. The regime is now faced with the challenges of non- adherence, while the current method to detect non-adherence, the laboratory detection of viral load invisible to our primary health care services with inadequate laboratory facilities. There is need for clinical indicator tool to detect non-adherence. The objective of this study was to describe and establish opportunistic infections (OIs) clinical symptoms as indicators of detecting non-adherence to ARV triple therapy among HIV positive pregnant women.

Method: The cross section descriptive method, using medical assessment and self report questionnaire was used to identify most common OIs clinical symptoms among pregnant women receiving ARV therapy during antenatal period in Dar es Salaam Tanzania.

Results: Among 105 participants, 63(60%) of them developed either early AIDS, WHO clinical stages 1 and 2 OIs symptoms or late symptoms, WHO clinical stages 3 and 4, while 42(40%) did not. The most common OIs early stage symptoms, results of non-adherence are; frequently fatigue 46(43.8%), persistent profuse night sweats 43(40.9%), persistent muscle aches 41(39%), and unexplained recurring fever 39(37.1%), while the late stage symptoms; extreme and unexplained tiredness 43(40.9%), recurrent severe pneumonia 37(35.2%), recurring fever with profuse night sweats 33(31.4%) and unexplained rapid weight loss >10% 27(25.7%). The women aged 26-40 years are likely to non-adherence compared to other age groups. Women living with their partners are more non-adherent compared to these living without partners.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the majority of pregnant women receiving ARV are non-adherents to their treatment. The most common OIs clinical symptoms represent non-adherence indicators during antenatal ARV therapy. Clinicians can use these OIs symptoms as clinical diagnosis of non-adherence to ARV treatment regime for further actions.

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