

Determinants of Under-Nutrition among HIV Positive Children on HAART

Ramesh Katuri

Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Telangana, India

Editorial

Malnutrition is one of the major causes of death in under-five children and it accounts for around 11% of the total disease burden and 35% of child deaths worldwide. The 2018 Global Nutrition Report reveals that the global burden of malnutrition is unacceptably high and affects every country in the world. According to this report, decreasing child mortality and improving maternal health depend heavily on reducing malnutrition. The prevalence of under-nutrition among children has been declined globally from 25% in 1990 to 15% in 2015. However, geographic inequalities persisted among countries concerning child malnutrition. Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are the two most affected regions with child malnutrition where nearly 90% of all underweight children residing in these regions. The number of children with stunting has increased by about one third between 1990 and 2013. According to a meta-analysis study, in the year 2015, an estimated 36.6% of under-five children were stunted, 8.6% wasted and 19.5% were underweight in SSA. This study further showed that more than 23% of deaths in under-five children were related to child growth failure.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has posed an inescapable challenge to the global community, particularly in Africa. A massive effort is needed to bolster the impact of the epidemic, and nutritional care and support should be integral elements of any action taken. HIV infection is a major public health problem in

children especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where around 1.8 million under 15 years old age children being infected with HIV worldwide in 2015 alone. More than 90% of these infected children were found in sub-Saharan Africa.

A study on the nutritional status of children born from HIV positive mothers has shown that 31.5% of children fewer than 5 years of age were moderately stunted. The impact of malnutrition is higher in HIV infected children, as a result, wasting and weight loss are common features of HIV infected children. Children with HIV are more affected with severe malnutrition than non- infected children. The risk of mortality is also three times higher in HIV-infected children than non-HIV-infected children with severe malnutrition.

In Ethiopia, the prevalence of stunting and underweight among under-five children has declined from 44% in 2011 to 38% and from 29% in 2011 to 24% in 2016 respectively. A study in Ethiopia has revealed that the prevalence of malnutrition among HIV positive children using the mid-upper arm circumference is 42.9%, with 10.3% of severe malnutrition. According to this study, 41.7% of under-five children were underweight, 65% stunted and 5.8% were wasted. This indicates the need for an evidence-based response to alleviate the overall burden of malnutrition and to reduce the severity and complexity of the impact that HIV/AIDS and malnutrition have on each other. However, studies on the determinants of under-nutrition among HIV positive children in Ethiopia are limited. Thus, this study aimed to assess determinants of under-nutrition among HIV positive children on HAART attending public hospitals in North Wollo Zone.

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***Address for Correspondence:** Ramesh Katuri, Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Telangana, India, Tel: (+91) 903 254 218; E-mail: ramesh.ka@gmail.com

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