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Filling the Gap:

An Examination of HIV/AIDS Treatment and Prevention at
Uganda Cares Masaka

By Andrew Robert McAsey

Academic Director: Martha Wandera

Internship Advisor: Stephen Nakibinge

Abstract

A six week internship was conducted at Uganda Cares Masaka, a HIV/AIDS treatment organization, to learn about the development issues surrounding the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The internship was aimed at gaining practical experience at an HIV/AIDS clinic to learn about the challenges faced and the strategies used by Uganda Cares as well as the effectiveness of their strategies. Uganda Cares represents a collaborative relationship between the private, international HIV treatment and advocacy group, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), and the public Ministry of Health (MOH) in Uganda. A final objective of the internship was to gain an inside perspective on this relationship and to reflect on how such relationships can be used to improve medical services in Uganda.

In the context of the internship several methods were used to achieve the desired objectives. Participant observation of the daily activities at Uganda Cares was the primary method used as the intern engaged in the different aspects of Uganda Cares' work. Informal and formal interviews were used to reflect on what was experienced and observed and to answer questions unanswered by participant observation. Statistical data on Uganda Cares' services was gathered using Uganda Cares' electronic record system.

Decentralization of care, emphasis on adherence, and psychosocial support were found to be the key strategies which Uganda Cares employs. The most prominent challenges faced by Uganda Cares were found to be the epidemic's scale in Uganda, stigmatization of HIV/AIDS, poor adherence to treatment, the expense of care, and the logistics of delivering care. The effectiveness of Uganda Cares' strategies in the face of the challenges was best observed through the extent of services provided and the great number of people tested, educated, and treated. Over its ten year history, Uganda Cares has enrolled 19,179 clients and provided them free HIV treatment at no cost. In addition, Uganda Cares can reach up to 10,000 people in one year for HIV testing and education. The scale of Uganda Cares activities speak to its high capability and effectiveness to reach clients for testing and care. The examination of the relationship between the Ugandan Ministry of Health and the AIDS Healthcare Foundation revealed cooperation which yielded an increase in capacity for both organizations which benefits all those who need HIV/AIDS treatment. Overall, the internship gave an inside perspective on HIV/AIDS treatment in Uganda and highlighted some unique ways to address the issues of HIV/AIDS.

To all those who dedicate their life to the treatment and prevention of HIV and AIDS

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