research with socio-cultural systems in the fight against HIV/AIDS

Mungai, JM

Abstract:

The rapid spread of AIDS in Africa has brought into focus the need to integrate medical science with socio-cultural beliefs and practices. The scientific knowledge on HIV, immune systems and drugs is well established. However, the drugs which are in use in the developed countries are too expensive for the great majority of the persons with HIV/AIDS in Africa. On the other hand, Africa is rich in socio-cultural traditions which have served their respective communities well. However, because of poverty and ignorance, many of the socio-cultural systems are helping in HIV/AIDS to spread increasingly fast. This therefore means that the most important weapon that Africa has for fighting HIV/AIDS is education through our socio-cultural systems. In this connection, for example, it is necessary to make the people understand that malnutrition will help the HIV to destroy the immune systems faster than it would do in a well-nourished person. This means therefore that the people need to be educated on the types of foods they must eat in order to get the necessary vitamins, proteins and calories. This is turn has implications on agricultural practices. It is also vital to make the people understand that other diseases do help HIV in suppressing immunity and that they should seek medical help as soon as they feel unwell. HIV/AIDS is a very expensive public health crisis. Families and health services are finding it difficult to meet all the needs of persons with AIDS. It is because of this that the rich African tradition of mutual social responsibility can play a major role in ameliorating the suffering and sharing the responsibility. A very major component of mutual social responsibility is co-operation and co-operative education among members of the community. Since the young persons constitute the most affected population , an educational system based on socio-cultural tradition of mutual social responsibility will help the young persons to acquire socially acceptable values and ethics which they need for survival. What has been said about HIV/AIDS is applicable to all health problems such as malaria and mother to child health (MCM). Health research and publications are important in making health policies precise and relevant. The application of those precise policies in solving health problems in Africa will in turn be more cost-effective and cost-beneficial if they are integrated with the socio-cultural systems