

Contextualising the paediatric HIV epidemic: a review.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

To draw attention to the sub-optimal care that HIV-infected children are receiving in Africa.

DATA SOURCES:

Relevant published literature.

DATA SYNTHESIS:

Sub-optimal response to paediatric HIV infection has aggravated the negative impact that the epidemic has had on child health in Africa. Recently the African Network for the Care of Children Affected by HIV/AIDS (ANNECA) released an advocacy statement that called for the optimisation of prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for children affected by the AIDS pandemic. Effective prevention strategies if comprehensively implemented, could prevent more than 500 000 paediatric infections per annum at current antenatal HIV prevalence rates.

Improved care that includes universal utilisation of early diagnostic testing systems, cotrimoxazole prophylaxis, nutritional support and the timely introduction of antiretroviral therapy could improve the quality of life and lifespan of most infected children.

CONCLUSION:

Political leaders, public health officials and fellow child health professionals are urged to redouble their efforts to reverse the magnitude of the paediatric epidemic in Africa.