

Mental health needs in HIV services at Mae Tao Clinic

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Overview

- Setting the context
- HIV services at Mae Tao Clinic
- HIV program clients
- Mental health needs for persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs) and caretakers
- HIV counseling services
- Challenges
- Important things to remember
- Ways to improve HIV mental health services



Setting the context

- ~1,000 HIV tests/year through VCT
- ~4,000 HIV tests/year through ANC
- VCT client origins
 - Internal referrals
 - Migrant outreach organizations
 - Self referral



HIV Services at MTC

- Voluntary counseling and testing (VCT)
- Anti-retroviral therapy
- Treatment of opportunistic infections
- ANC screening
- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT)
- Peer counseling (8)
- Home visitation
- Psychosocial support
- Supplemental nutrition
 - Milk powder to replace breast milk
 - Rice, eggs, sardines, and oil
- Referrals to partner organizations for safe shelter

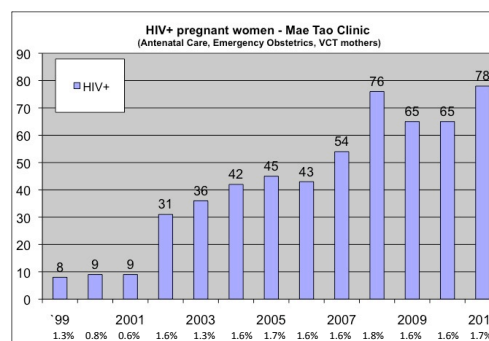


HIV program clients

- >300 HIV+ individuals supported by MTC
 - Women (10) and children (7) in SAW's safe shelter
 - Men (15) in safe shelter at Men's Health Center
- 76 clients on ART
 - CD4 <200
 - Financial support from Thai MOPH (58) and MTC (18)
- ~50 PMTCT clients/year



PMTCT at MTC



Mental health needs for PLHAs

- Social isolation
- Loss of spouse (divorce/abandonment/death)
- Orphaned children
- Lack of income
- Worry about the future
- Worry about others' knowing their status
- Harmful behaviors
- Blaming others
- Depression – especially in advanced stage, after ARVs start and situation doesn't improve



Mental health needs for caretakers

- Tired and stressed in taking care of clients who are depressed or who act inappropriately
- Special needs for HIV+ caretakers
- Difficulty enforcing rules
- Relationship challenges among clients
 - Jealousy
 - Domestic violence
- Clients' lack of motivation to participate in income generation projects



HIV counseling services (1)

- VCT
- Ongoing peer counseling
 - Facilities-based
 - Home-based
- Psychosocial support
 - Self-Help Care group discussion once every 2 months
 - Games
 - Health promotion
- Support for caretakers at safe shelters



HIV counseling services (2)

- Peer counseling
 - 8 HIV+ peer counselors (5 men, 3 women)
 - Help patients learn how to be healthy while living with HIV
 - Nutrition and prevention of OIs
 - Ways to prevent transmission
 - Ways to have a healthy sex life
 - Referrals for treatment of OIs



HIV counseling services (3)

- Psychosocial support
 - Social outings to waterfalls, monasteries (60-80pp)
 - Eat together
 - Play games together
 - Family-friendly
 - Health promotion activities
- Challenges
 - Clients have no documentation
 - Must transport with MTC truck
 - Must ask permission from authorities in advance
 - Must pay bribes at checkpoints
 - Rude clients ask for money or alcohol



HIV counseling services (4)

- Support for caretakers at safe shelters
 - Group discussion to listen and problem-solve together
 - Social outings (e.g. picnics)



Challenges (1)

- Missed appointments
 - Do not want employers/neighbors/partners to know why they are always going to the clinic
 - Employers do not allow to leave work
- Lack of protection
 - Sex workers do not want clients to know
- Clients in safe shelters have less motivation to work on income generation projects
- Domestic violence



Challenges (2)

- Lack of compliance
 - When client realizes s/he is dying and severe depression sets in
 - When client cannot find a job in Mae Sot and decides to move back to Burma
- Lack of funding to perform CD4 test for all
- Clients living in Burma cannot receive ART
- Patients arrive too late
 - 5 patients/month die at MTC



Important things to remember

- HIV+ individuals need:
 - Peers/friends who will listen
 - Ongoing, consistent, and reliable support
 - ART – we feel happy when we feel healthy
- Caretakers need:
 - Validation and guidance



Ways to improve HIV mental health services

- Increase access to ARVs – feeling physically healthy offers hope
- Quality counseling to encourage healthy behavior
- Psychosocial activities to lift spirits and foster sense of community

