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Factors that Influence the Uptake of Antiretroviral Therapy Services in Lyantonde District: A Case Study of Mpumudde Sub-county.

This study examined the factors that influence utilisation, trends as well as community knowledge on poor use of Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) services for managing HIV/AIDS in Lyantonde district. Mpumudde sub-county was used as a case study to explore in depth and obtain a clear picture of the exact factors that have significant influence on utilisation of ART services in rural areas of Lyantonde district. Anti-Retroviral Therapy clients and service providers participated in the study. Respondents to structured interviews were selected from a list of names of clients used by the health institutions in Lyantonde. A fifth of the total number of clients was targeted to participate in the study and their selection was achieved through the use of a table of random numbers to avoid sampling bias. In total, data were collected from ninety seven clients. Additional data were collected through focus group discussions held with four teams of service providers. The study revealed seven user-related factors that have significant influence on proper ART services utilisation in Mpumudde sub-county. These factors are: gender, presence of a source of information on ART use within the household, the number of sources of information on ART use within the community, number of health units within a one kilometre radius from the household, awareness of the dangers of poor ART use, depth of knowledge on problems associated with poor ART use and the number of opportunistic infections previously suffered by an individual. Anti-Retroviral Therapy service providers reported twenty one challenges that influence utilisation of ART services in Mpumudde sub-county. Of the twenty one challenges, the five major ones were, insufficient human resource to handle clients; payments for opportunistic infections which tend to keep clients away; mobility of clients that complicates follow up; low literacy levels which makes it difficult for clients to understand prescription messages; and non-disclosure of HIV status by wives to their partners. Furthermore, the study found out that there are gaps for previous years of clients utilising ART services in Mpumudde sub-county. These gaps were attributed to transfer of staff and poor records management by staff at health units. Furthermore, service providers as well as users demonstrated high levels of knowledge with respect to dangers associated with poor use of ART services. The implications of these findings on ART services utilisation and delivery have been discussed. In particular, this study recommends that ART service providers should be given more resources to enable them keep and secure records of clients, pay more attention to sensitisation of women on the benefits of proper and consistent use of ART services and conduct deeper and extensive community education on the negative health outcomes of neglect and improper use of ART services.

Key Words: **Antiretroviral Therapy Services, Lyantonde District**