**EDITORIAL**

Need for Intensification of HIV / AIDS Research in Africa

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Over the past decade there have been well programmed efforts in many sub-Saharan African countries to combat the large burden of HIV / AIDS in the continent. However, when it comes to the reduction in the dynamism with which the disease spreads in several of these countries, very little has been accomplished so far. Although some countries such as Uganda, Senegal and Ghana have made some reductions in the rate of the epidemic, many countries, especially South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, have continued.

To increase and increase in relation to the incidence and prevalence of the virus among high-risk groups in their populations. Despite the reasons such as good political leadership and a better economy to explain the decline in HIV / AIDS prevalence in Uganda, Ghana and Senegal, it can be argued that South Africa and Botswana also have good economies and stable governments. Why then is the prevalence and incidence of HIV still rising in those countries that are among the most endowed with social infrastructure in Africa?

This paradoxical situation deserves further study to better understand the epidemic and to identify the best approaches and practices to reduce the spread of the virus in the continent. The article by Christine Panchaud and her colleagues in this issue1 demonstrates the difficulties in measuring the prevalence and the tendency of HIV in Africa. Prevalence and trend monitoring are currently dependent on sentinel studies that have limitations in that they do not adequately represent the population studied. All other related information, such as AIDS case surveillance, based on national AIDS declaration, death registration and STD surveillance data and TB are severely limited as many of these events are not reported In several African countries. Thus, the true burden of the epidemic in Africa is not yet known, suggesting the need for new research methods to measure the precise manner in which the disease prevalence and incidence are measured.

In addition to measuring prevalence and trends, most HIV / AIDS research studies in Africa have focused on identifying HIV / AIDS knowledge, attitudes and practices in different High risk. Such studies have shown that knowledge of HIV / AIDS is high and continues to increase in several regions of the continent. As Christine Panchaud and her colleagues reported in this review, attitudes towards condoms and the actual use of condoms for HIV / AIDS prevention among different categories of high-risk groups remain low in the continent. In spite of the high knowledge of HIV / AIDS in Africa, there is still considerable debate about the effectiveness of condoms for prevention; And there are formal, legislative, cultural, social and religious barriers that limit the use of condoms across the continent. Research is needed on the nature of these barriers and identify strategies for overcoming them. In addition, we need to better understand why people continue to engage in high-risk sexual behavior despite their knowledge of HIV / AIDS and identify new interventions to combat problems.

To date, there have been few well-conducted intervention studies specifically aimed at preventing and managing HIV / AIDS treatment in the continent. Apart from the well-known randomized community trials that illustrate the effectiveness of STD treatment in reducing the incidence of HIV2,3 there is almost a complete lack of HIV intervention research / AIDS in Africa. Without such studies, it will be difficult to identify viable practices and methods for dealing with the epidemic and to determine the relative cost-effectiveness of the various methods currently employed. In our view, intervention research that could potentially alter official HIV / AIDS prevention policies in Africa needs to assess the cost-effectiveness of condoms in preventing HIV / AIDS, possibly in couples who are incompatible with HIV / AIDS. AIDS. Secondly, such research should evaluate the potential effectiveness of sex education in reducing HIV / AIDS prevalence, especially to answer the question of whether sex education increases sexual activity and promiscuity in young people. These are some of the controversies that currently harass the advocacy and awareness of HIV / AIDS in Africa and that could be resolved through true scientific evidence that is based on well-conducted research. Although such studies have been conducted in developed countries with results showing that condoms are effective and sexual education does not increase promiscuity among young people, policymakers and the general public in Africa have not Accepted these results. There is therefore a need to repeat these studies using African populations and to disseminate the results among the main stakeholders.

Another area where research is needed in Africa is the treatment of HIV / AIDS. Many indigenous treatment methods for HIV / AIDS are being advocated in various parts of Africa; Many of these methods have not been adequately evaluated to verify their effectiveness and relative effectiveness. Despite the lack of evidence regarding their safety and effectiveness, many of these methods are increasingly used in several regions of Africa in preference to those that have been better tested. Issues of ethics and human rights related to the use of such untested methods are daunting. Obviously, there is a need to identify a framework for the regulation and use of HIV / AIDS drugs, as the use of ineffective drugs is a likely explanation for the current high incidence of HIV / AIDS-related fatality In the continent.

In conclusion, there are excellent prospects for HIV / AIDS research in Africa. Such research should shift from the field of quantitative surveys and KAP studies to more rigorously in-depth fields of study, based on qualitative experimentation and intervention research. This will provide a better understanding of why current HIV programming efforts in Africa are not achieving desired goals and provide alternative avenues of action needed to activate the process. In addition, we suggest that monitoring and evaluation be an important part of any HIV / AIDS prevention initiative in Africa. Indeed, research must be targeted as part of any HIV / AIDS prevention and care initiative in Africa in the years to come.

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