

Improving HIV/AIDS management in children: Nutrition as a vital component

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ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS is ranked third in the projections of the global burden of disease by the year 2030, in spite of considerable efforts at care and funding for treatment. A major underlying factor is the complex interaction between HIV/AIDS and nutrition. In general, malnutrition exacerbates HIV disease progression and poor outcome. Children are particularly vulnerable with high mortality attributed directly to the infection and indirectly from malnutrition, in particular severe acute malnutrition (SAM). This paradigm in children with HIV/AIDS is due to the impaired productivity of parents, decline in income and competitive demands that makes it impossible for provision of food that is qualitative and of the desired quantity.

Adequate nutrition is at the core of syndemics which seeks re-conceptualization of diseases in the biosocial context. HIV/AIDS infection frequently occurs with two or more diseases which interact to amplify either or both diseases. If such interaction occurs under poor nutritional environment, the consequence is further exacerbated, particularly in children. A new approach in the care of children living with HIV/AIDSs that seeks to integrate the social context with strong emphasis on adequate nutritional provision is of high importance.