

Research Gaps and Priorities in HIV Prevention and Testing

Professor F. E. Okonofua

Thematic Areas of Intervention in the Revised 2010 National HIV Policy

- Prevention of new infections
- Treatment of HIV/AIDS and related health problems
- Care and support for people living with and are affected by AIDS
- Institutional architecture and resourcing
- Advocacy, legal issues and human rights
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Research and knowledge

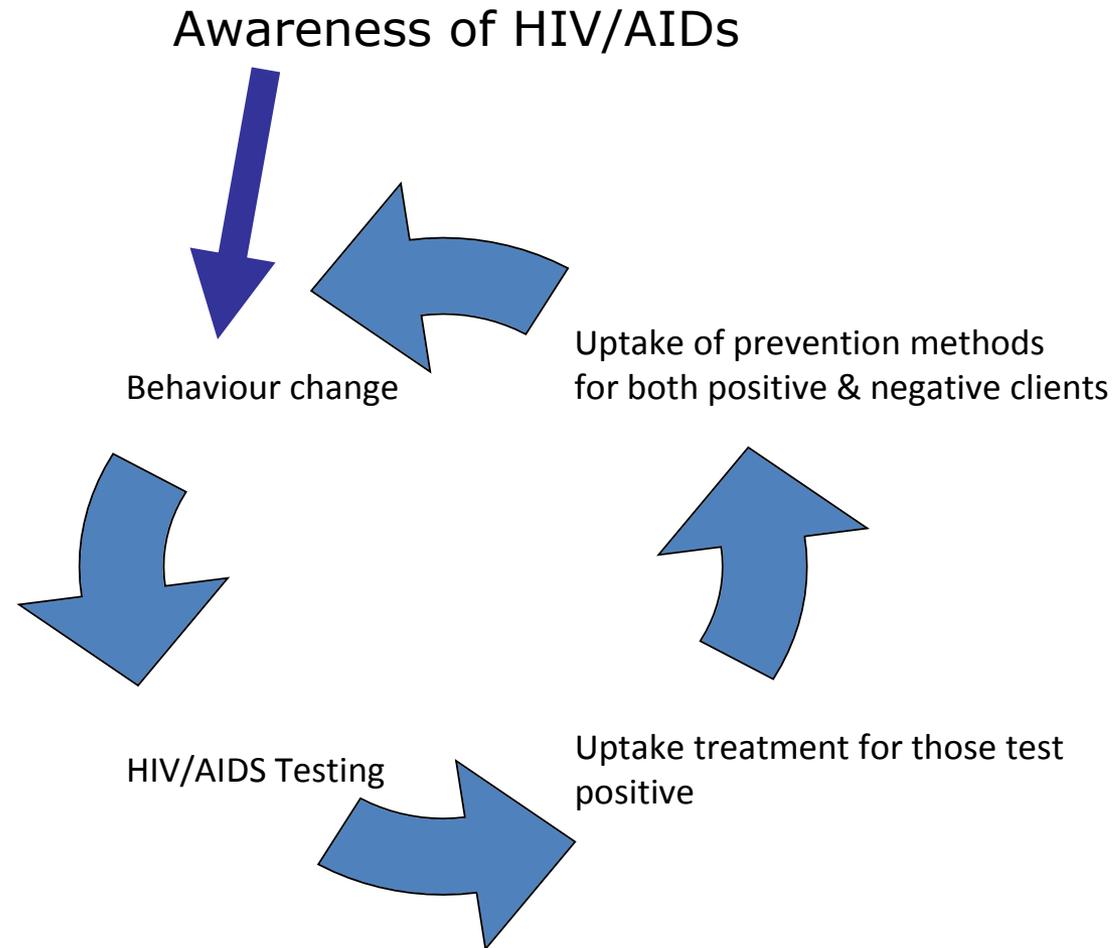
The Importance of Research

- To establish the context under HIV is acquired and to monitor trends over time
- To guide the design of appropriate interventions
- To evaluate and compare the cost-effectiveness of various interventions designed to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS
- To generate new knowledge in HIV science that will inform the design of effective prevention and treatment strategies

State of Research in HIV Prevention in Nigeria

- Formative research that describes HIV prevalence, patterns of knowledge of HIV, and attitudes towards prevention methods are generally available
- Less available are behavioral science & intervention research that tests the effectiveness and relative effectiveness of various types of community interventions and approaches for preventing HIV/AIDS
- Even less available are operations and evaluation research that assesses the outcomes and impact of interventions for preventing HIV

A Conceptual Model for Understanding HIV/AIDS Prevention



Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT)

- An important entry point in the prevention cycle
- It is a bridge between primary and secondary prevention
- Correlates well with treatment uptake and outcomes
- An important indicator of the quality, extent and depth of prevention programs

Objectives of NACA 2010-2015

Comprehensive National Framework

- To reach 80% of sexually active adults and 80% of Most-at-Risk Populations with HIV counseling and testing by 2015
- To ensure that 80% of eligible adults and 100% of eligible children are receiving ART by 2015
- To improve access to quality care and support services to at least 50% of people living with HIV by 2015

Current HIV Data for Nigeria

Adult prevalence - 4.6%

Number of persons living with the virus - 2.98 million

Annual AIDs deaths - 192,000

Numbers of persons needing ARV - 857,455

Some UNGASS Indicators Relating to VCT in Nigeria

- % of women and men aged 15-4 who received HIV testing in the last 12 months and who know the results 11.7%
(11.9% for males, 11.4% for females)
- % of HIV positive women receiving ARV treatment 18.7%
- % of MAR populations that have received an HIV test in the last 12 months and who know the results
 - < 25 yrs : 32.2%
 - ≥ 25yrs : 40.9%
 - FSW 38.2%
 - MSM 30.2%
 - IDU 23.2%
 - Armed Forces 70.5%

Challenges facing VCT in Nigeria

- Lack of interest in testing programs
- Limited testing sites
 - In 2007, only 3% of health facilities had VCT
 - In 2008, only 1 VCT facility was available for 80,000 Nigerian adults
- Patients' centred issues – poor attitudes to VCT & inappropriate health seeking behavior
- Lack of ethical standards and quality control at testing sites

The Need for Research

If NACA is to meet its 2010-2015 prevention targets, it must focus its efforts on increasing the number of persons accessing VCT.

Research is needed to identify the context under which people use or do not use VCT and the best strategy to be adopted to scale up VCT services across the country.

Research Gaps in VCT (1)

- Research is needed to determine what people know or do not know about VCT, and the reasons for poor uptake of VCT services
- Anecdotal reports indicate that people may refuse VCT because of concerns about stigma, discrimination or possible violence and simply the fear of the unknown.
- There is a need for in-depth social science and anthropological research among different groups and populations to uncover the reasons for non-use of VCT
- The findings would inform the design of culturally sensitive methods of promoting VCT in our region

Research Gaps in VCT (2)

Despite the disinclination of people to undergo VCT, research have shown that innovative methods and approaches can be Used to increase uptake of VCT

Examples:

- Providing VCT with other health services
- Use of mass media
- Use of home testing methods
- Promotion of VCT by persons openly living with HIV
- Provision of VCT in working places

There is need for intervention research (before and after, experimental or quasi-experimental) that tests the effectiveness of innovative approaches for increasing the uptake of VCT

HIV & STI Health – Seeking behaviour Research

- Research on HIV & STI health seeking behavior is currently lacking in Nigeria
- Anthropological research is needed to determine how people think about STI & HIV testing and treatment, and how they reach decision on alternative sources of testing and treatment - (a decision tree analysis)
- For example, how do people chose between informal versus formal providers and between private versus public services?
- Are costs, confidentiality and treatment effectiveness important considerations ? What other cultural or social factors may be important?
- How can we increase the use of effective formal treatment services ?

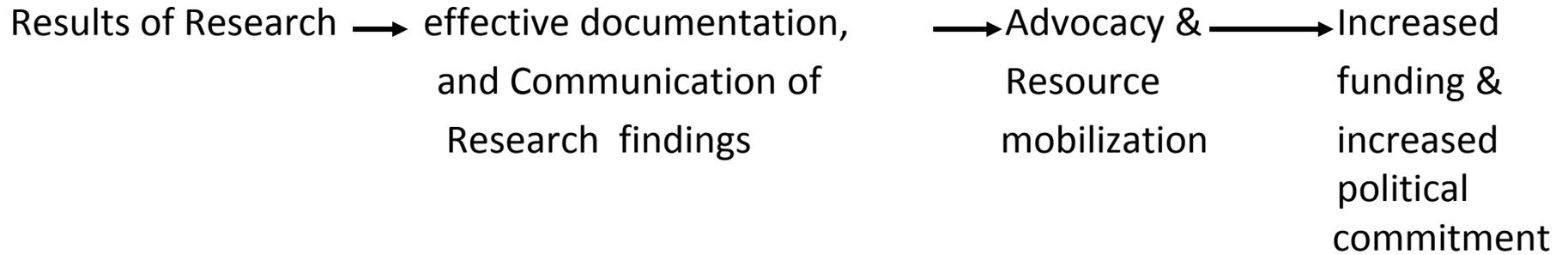
Clinical, and Biomedical Research

- Diagnostic accuracy & patient acceptability of new methods of home-based testing e.g. use of saliva
- Couple concordance or discordance research including the effect of prevention methods in reducing the rate of sero-conversion of sero-negative partners

Policy Research

- Research that demonstrate the positive effects of VCT on sexual behavioral change and in reducing the incidence of new HIV infections
- Cost-effectiveness research. Research that show how VCT may reduce the cost of HIV treatment
- Gender, and age-disaggregated research relating to VCT and uptake of HIV interventions

Use of Research



Research Capacity Needs for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria

NACA has identified the lack of a national Research agenda and poor coordination of research efforts as a major challenge in HIV/AIDS control in the country.

Efforts to increase capacity for research and to re-build the HIV research constituency will prove useful in consolidating HIV interventions and control in Nigeria in the coming years

THANK YOU