

HIV/AIDS Communications Project: HIV in Sindh, Pakistan 2019 Webinar Summaries

Webinar #1: HIV Disease: Myths and Facts

Date & Time: May 19, 2019, 12:00-1:30 PM EDT

Host & Speaker: Fizza S. Gillani, PhD

This webinar introduced details about the HIV disease to the medical community in Sindh. Key topics discussed include:

- HIV definition and disease progression
- Various modes of HIV transmission in general and those specific to Pakistan
- Myths and facts about HIV disease to reduce HIV stigma in Pakistan
- The importance of providing effective provider- patient encounters

The webinar was attended by medical school faculty, medical students, physicians, and health administrators from the Sindh Province in Pakistan. Concerns raised by the audience included: the lack of availability of diagnostic equipment across the interior Sindh region, limited availability of HIV drugs, unethical practices of blood transfusion, re-use of syringes and lack of sufficient resources to address the province's 2019 HIV outbreak.

Webinar #2: HIV Testing, Stigma and Patient- Provider Communication

Date & Time: May 26, 2019, 12:00-1:30 PM EDT

Guest Speaker: Phillip Chan, MD

This webinar provided information on the importance of establishing and sustaining an HIV testing system, one that will ensure early treatment and normal life expectancy, prior to dealing with an HIV outbreak. The following topics were discussed:

- Different types of HIV tests
- HIV tests and treatments available in Sindh, Pakistan
- HIV diagnostic tests for newborns and infants
- How to address HIV outbreak
- How to address HIV stigma specific to Pakistan

Webinar participants, representing members of the healthcare community in Sindh, Pakistan, raised numerous concerns during the discussion, such as the effectiveness of different HIV diagnostic tests in newborns, different HIV drug regimen therapies, and the long-term side effects of HIV therapy.

Webinar #3: The HIV Care Cascade: An Example from Rhode Island

Date & Time: June 2, 2019, 12:00-1:30 PM EDT

Guest Speaker: Joseph M. Garland, MD

This webinar provided information about the HIV-Care Continuum, a treatment cascade which frames the treatment of HIV with the goal of viral suppression, and featured the following key points:

- The three components of the HIV-Care Continuum
- UNAIDS' 90-90-90 campaign globally and in Rhode Island
- The importance of educating patients and family members about HIV

Webinar participants raised questions about the average cost of treating HIV in the U.S., standard precautions to follow in HIV clinics, and application of the 90-90-90 model in Pakistan. The discussion also included information about living at home with an HIV infected person, training medical staff, HIV post exposure prophylaxis guidelines, and the health insurance system in Pakistan.

Webinar #4: Preventing Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission and Caring for Infected Infants & Children

Date & Time: June 9, 2019, 12:00-1:30 PM EDT

Guest Speaker: Susan Cu-Uvin, MD; Jerome Larkin, MD; Sabina Holland, MD

This webinar provided comprehensive knowledge about the presentation of HIV in children and the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission. Speakers discussed the following key features during this webinar:

- Acute HIV infection in children and adolescents
- Clinical presentations of HIV in children
- Life-threatening opportunistic infections in children with HIV
- Management of HIV infection in children in resource-limited countries
- Prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission

Webinar participants, including medical staff and students from Sindh, Pakistan, asked questions on how to manage side effects of ARV therapy in children, the monitoring of HIV medicine toxicity in children, the best modes of delivery for HIV positive mothers, and concerns about performing invasive procedures on HIV positive pregnant women.

Webinar #5: Caring for Co-Infected Patients (HIV-TB, HIV-HEP C, HIV-HEP B)

Date & Time: June 16, 2019, 12:00 – 1:30 EDT

Guest Speaker: Martha Sanchez, MD; Natasha Rybak, MD

This webinar provided information on HIV co-infections and covered the following topics:

- The similarity between modes of transmission for HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C
- HIV-HEP B presentation, prevalence, diagnosis, and treatment
- HIV-HEP C presentation, diagnosis, and treatment
- HIV-TB presentation, diagnosis, and treatment for HIV infected children
- The importance of open communications between healthcare providers and patients about HIV disease

Webinar participants raised concerns about managing infants with HIV co-infections, management of HIV positive children with complications of TB, and the interaction of various drugs for co-infected children.

Webinar #6: Fostering Hope: The Role of Mental Health Care in HIV Treatment from Start to Finish

Date & Time: June 23, 2019, 12:00 – 1:30 EDT

Guest Speaker: Jamie Kenney, PhD; Aziz Soomro, MD

The final webinar in this series discussed the association between mental health care and HIV infection and treatment. Speakers addressed the adverse effects of antiretroviral therapy on patients' quality of sleep, stress levels, and mental health, which can affect patients' compliance towards HIV treatment. Key features discussed during this webinar included:

- Interventions prior to testing for HIV to address fears, social practices and beliefs
- Post-testing intervention and counseling
- Incorporation of psychological evaluations at each HIV appointment to prevent emergence of mental health symptoms
- Maintaining communication between healthcare providers and patients about HIV disease progression

Webinar participants discuss the limited availability of facilities for pre- and post-testing counseling in Pakistan. The discussion covered factors such as raising awareness of mental health issues associated with HIV infection to doctors, nurses, and educators who encounter HIV infected patients, as well as instilling hope into patients to ultimately improve treatment compliance, decrease suffering, and improve patients' quality of life.