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Symptomatic sexually transmitted infections among women receiving antiretroviral therapy in the municipal of Dodoma, Tanzania

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Background: The risk to acquire and transmit Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV) has been found to increase with increasing rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). That is why the World Health Organization (WHO) has included STI screening at every visit of patients living with HIV. There is limited information on other STIs among women receiving treatment at the HIV clinic in Dodoma, Tanzania, hence the need to investigate the factors associated with STIs among patients living with HIV and receiving care.

Methods: Women (n=210) receiving care from HIV clinic at Dodoma Regional Referral Hospital and were sexually active between age 18 and 50 were included in this study. Self-reported responses on the symptoms of STIs were obtained from the interviewers during the survey. All data obtained were analyzed on SAS 9.4.

Results: About 20% of the participants reported at least one symptom of STIs and 80% reported no symptoms of STIs. Higher proportions of the participants with multiple partners were found to report symptoms of STIs. Reported symptoms of STIs were found to be associated with area of residence (p=0.034), income per month (p=0.0015), educational level (p=0.029), marital status (p=0.0044), age of first intercourse (p=0.014). Rural dwellers and participants who had first sex younger than 18 years old were found to be more likely to report symptoms of STIs. (rural vs. urban dwellers (OR=3.33 95% CI: 1.5-7.4); <18 vs. ≥18 years for age of first intercourse (OR=2.42 95% CI: 1.06-5.54)). The once-married participants were 88 % less likely to report symptoms of STIs compared to the never-married participants (95% CI: 0.033-0.44) and those who earned less than USD 54 were 76% less likely to report symptoms of STIs compared to those who earned USD 54 or more (95% CI: 0.097-0.57)

Conclusion: Reported cases of the symptoms of STIs were higher among the never-married rural dwellers that had first intercourse younger than 18 years and earned more than USD 54. Sexual health education should be integrated into patient's care and this identified population should be targeted for education at this clinic.

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