



GHAINing Ground

A Newsletter from the
Global HIV/AIDS Initiative Nigeria

JULY 2005



Laboratory scientists at the GHAIN ART site at General Hospital, Calabar.

Antiretroviral Therapy Gives New Hope to People Living with AIDS

In a major step to expand treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, the Global HIV/AIDS Initiative Nigeria (GHAIN) has begun antiretroviral therapy programs in eight government health facilities and one Catholic mission hospital in six Nigerian states. GHAIN is funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through U. S. Agency for International Development.

In the April 2005, GHAIN launched its antiretroviral therapy (ART) program in secondary hospitals in three states: Calabar General Hospital in Cross River, the Infectious Disease Hospital in Kano and Mainland General Hospital in Lagos. As of June, 254 people are receiving ART at these sites, and the number is growing daily. GHAIN is currently renovating five other sites to prepare them to offer ART services. GHAIN will scale up its ART sites rapidly to reach its goal of treating 4,540 people with ART by March 2006.

With the availability ART services, more people are willing to learn their HIV status. "The response of patients is very encouraging, and many more are willing to be tested and enlisted for ART," says Dr. Emmanuel Nkanor, the managing physician at the Calabar General Hospital, which began offering ART in April. "When we inaugurated the antiretroviral treatment, we were wondering where the clients would come from. The overwhelming response has shown that our fears were baseless."

A 23-year-old patient at the Lagos Mainland Hospital had a CD4 count of 100 before she started ART. "I am very happy to start the drugs," says the young woman. "My advice to others who are yet to be infected is that they should be very careful." She now advises others to go for counseling and testing.

To prepare the hospitals to offer antiretroviral drug, GHAIN trained health workers in adult and pediatric ART and in counseling patients on treatment adherence. Laboratory and pharmacy workers were also trained, and improvements to infrastructure ranged from providing CD4 and hematology testing equipment to upgrading water and installing generators to supplement inadequate electricity.

The training and equipment have positively impacted health care professionals at the ART sites. Bola F. O. Adeniran, Chief Pharmacist at Lagos Mainland Hospital, explains, "As health professional, I have great fulfillment that patients are able to get drugs whenever a prescriptions are made. Facilities are well furnished, and we now have a 24-hour supply of electricity, which helps to preserve our drugs. GHAIN has brought positive innovation that has made our work more challenging."

Before the launch of the GHAIN ART program at Calabar General Hospital in April, no ART site existed in Cross River State. Dr. Sylvester Ebaye, the GHAIN State Project Manager in Cross River, says, "Our success story emanates from the background that we had nothing on the ground for HIV treatment in the state. We have been able to provide a service that was until recently very distant from our people."

PERSONAL PROFILE

Our "Personal Profile" series features stories from people involved in GHAIN's field work. All profiles are used with permission.

"Some years ago my husband tested positive. He did not disclose the result of his test to me until the whole family began to fall ill. Then he advised that our only child go for an HIV test. It turned out that our son was negative. My husband apparently was afraid of disclosing his HIV status to me. It was then I asked him for his test result and discovered that he was indeed positive," explains a 30-year-old school teacher in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State, which has an HIV prevalence rate of 12 percent.

"Everybody in the family was shocked. My husband did not actually manifest any opportunistic infections, but he was really shocked when a cousin of his started spreading the news about his status. It was after my husband's death that out of curiosity I decided to go for HIV counseling and testing. [My test] came back positive," she says.

Now a member of the Hope Development Centre at Cottage Hospital, the woman began receiving ART from GHAIN through Calabar General Hospital in April. She has been adhering to her drug regimen and, apart from minor fever, reports experiencing much improvement.

"I need nutritional support because I am a low income earner," she explains. "My extended family members still depend on my meager income in spite of the fact that I am a widow. This makes it impossible to adequately care for myself." She expresses optimism that the new ART program will "reduce the mortality rate among people living with AIDS in the state."

GHAIN ART SITES

- Cross River State**
General Hospital, Calabar
- Edo State**
Central Hospital, Benin
- Kano State**
Infectious Disease Hospital, Kano
Murtala Mohammed Specialist Hospital, Kano
- Lagos State**
Lagos Mainland Hospital
Massey Street Children's Hospital, Lagos
- Anambra State**
St. Charles Borromeo Hospital, Onitsha
- Federal Capital Territory**
Wuse General Hospital, Abuja

Border Photos: Betty Press

Outside of South Africa, Nigeria is thought to have the largest epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated 3.5 to 4 million HIV-positive people.

At US\$193 million over five years, the Global HIV/AIDS Initiative Nigeria (GHAIN) is the largest comprehensive HIV/AIDS project ever implemented in a single developing country. Due to the scale of the epidemic, Nigeria requires an intervention of this magnitude.

Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the U.S. government is supporting the Nigerian government's response to the epidemic. GHAIN is one of several initiatives integral to this response. With the Nigerian govern-

ment providing leadership and setting the priorities for the intervention, GHAIN's working relationship with both the federal and state governments is central to its success. We appreciate the keen interest shown by the government, from the Honorable Minister of Health, who co-chairs the Emergency Plan's Steering Coordination Committee, to State Commissioners for Health, who have helped clear the way for and promote services at the state level. GHAIN staff work closely with their government counterparts in the National and State Action Committees for AIDS, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control and other agencies, including the uniformed services.

Providing antiretroviral therapy (ART) is one of GHAIN's key components, and in collaboration with the University



Message from Chief of Party, GHAIN

James L. Ross, PhD

is providing a gamut of other services to affected households, linking them to home-based care and support for orphans and vulnerable children. GHAIN will institutionalize this continuum of care with the Government of Nigeria and faith- and community-based organizations to ensure its long-term viability.

GHAIN's strength is its partners, both its seven main public- and private-sector partners, and its growing number of local partners, which include faith-based organizations like the Christian Health Association of Nigeria and the Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria. With the support of the Emergency Plan through the U.S. Agency for International Development, this innovative group of partners is poised to make a positive impact on the future of the HIV epidemic in Nigeria.

of Maryland's Action Project, we are introducing ART in tertiary and secondary hospitals in six states. GHAIN and Action have trained and equipped 196 clinicians and lab persons in ART to date.

While much attention is focused on the introduction of ART, it is important to stress that GHAIN is not just about therapy and testing. GHAIN is a comprehensive response implementing a continuum of care that ranges from prevention to treatment to care and support. GHAIN's prevention efforts are vital to the 95 percent of Nigerians who are not HIV positive. And as only 20 percent of those infected meet the medical criteria for initiating ART, GHAIN

GHAIN Launches Abstinence and Be Faithful Media Campaign

The Global HIV/AIDS Initiative Nigeria (GHAIN) is launching a major media campaign to promote abstinence among youth and mutual fidelity among married couples as the best forms of protection against HIV infection.

The campaign includes two 30-minute television soap operas: "Behind the Siege" in English and "Jan Kunne" in Hausa in Lagos and Kano respectively. GHAIN is also producing a 15-minute radio/TV variety show "Ahuike Di Mpka" in Pidgin English for Anambra State. Continuing the three programs, which started under Family Health International's IMPACT Project, builds on the United States Government's initial investment in them.

The media campaign includes programs by some of GHAIN's local partners. The AIDS Alliance of Nigeria will launch the "AIDS-ON-LINE" radio/TV talk show in Lagos; Women in Media is hosting the "GHAIN Hour" radio talk show in Kano.

In addition to promoting abstinence and faithfulness, all of the programs will motivate audiences to go for HIV counseling and testing, educate them about the availability of HIV/AIDS treatment and care, and create awareness on issues related to orphans and vulnerable children.

The "GHAIN Hour" on *Freedom FM*, Kano, began broadcasting in June, and the other programs are slated to go on air in late June 2005.

Family Health International Wins Lagos State Merit Award

The Lagos state government presented Family Health International (FHI) the 2004 “Excellent Support to Health Sector Award” in recognition of FHI’s ongoing contributions to health sector development in the state. The award was presented at a ceremony held April 29, 2005 in Lagos and drew dignitaries from the health sector and beyond. Dr. Susan Kanu, GHAIN’s State Project Manager for Lagos, received the award on behalf of FHI.

A statement from Dr. Leke Pitan, the Commissioner for Health, commended FHI and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for their ongoing contributions to the health sector and for providing much needed equipment that has improved the health of the state’s citizens.

FHI has worked in Lagos State since 1986. Under the USAID-funded IMPACT project, it implemented a comprehensive program in the state that included HIV prevention, care, support and surveillance. FHI continues to build on this work through the GHAIN Project, which recently launched an antiretroviral therapy treatment program at the Lagos Mainland Hospital.

In support of GHAIN’s investment in HIV counseling and testing services and antiretroviral therapy in Lagos, Pitan has decided that the state should respond by offering these services for free at secondary hospitals. “Even before the award, the Commissioner for Health was impressed with the efforts GHAIN was making. His interest has helped us go the extra mile to offer services for free in Lagos. This is really a success story for us,” says Kanu.



Participants at the HIV counseling workshop in Abuja.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Building HIV/AIDS Counseling Skills

Effective HIV counseling supports prevention and treatment by encouraging people to be tested, helping those who are negative develop strategies to prevent infection and helping those who are positive cope and access support services. GHAIN-partner FHI has trained 200 people in voluntary counseling and testing to date. “My new knowledge of counseling will benefit my community. It will help me to reduce the spread of HIV through reduction of risk behaviors,” says Hassena Mallami, a medical social worker at the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital.

Linking Pharmacy Organizations to Support ART

Howard University’s Pharmacists & Continuing Education (PACE) Center, a GHAIN partner, has hired six pharmacists to serve as State Pharmacy Coordinators in GHAIN’s six priority states. The State Pharmacy Coordinators assess services in hospital and community pharmacies and meet with state chapters of organizations like the Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria and the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria to inform them about the GHAIN project. These meetings help build an information network for GHAIN and lay a foundation for later technical collaboration. In coming months, the State Pharmacy Coordinators will provide professional pharmacy organizations with structured trainings and seminars.

Training Health Workers in Patient Management and Monitoring

Tracking patients and their care is necessary for both evaluating the success of HIV interventions and ensuring that patients receive quality care. To meet this need, GHAIN has developed a paper-based patient management and monitoring (PMM) system for adults and children in Nigeria. GHAIN-partner, The Futures Group, held a three-day workshop in February in Abuja to refine the PMM. A total of 38 doctors, nurses, medical records staff and government policy makers attended the workshop, giving feedback on the PMM system and learning to teach others to use it. Key issues like confidentiality of patient information were also covered. GHAIN is currently collaborating with the Government of Nigeria to refine the PMM into a standardized tool that can be used nationally.

Building Health Care Workers’ ARV Skills

To build health care workers’ capacity to administer ART, GHAIN and the University of Maryland Institute of Human Virology held a five-day training workshop in May at the GHAIN office in Abuja. The workshop trained 35 doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other health workers from public secondary and tertiary health facilities on topics including HIV epidemiology, laboratory diagnosis of HIV infection, antiretroviral prescription, adherence, counseling and universal infection precautions. To date, GHAIN has trained 145 physicians and nurses in ART and 143 pharmacists and others in drug logistics.



Dr. Aderemi Desalu, HIV/AIDS Special Adviser to Governor Bola Tinubu, presents the health sector award to Dr. Susan Kanu, GHAIN’s Lagos State Manager.

Referral Network Is Key to GHAIN's Strategy

A broad array of institutions—community groups, faith-based organizations, public health care facilities and private hospitals—provide HIV/AIDS services in Nigeria. In many cases, providers at these different sites do not know what other HIV services are available for their clients in the community. To address this knowledge gap and ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) receive complete care and support, the Global HIV/AIDS Initiative Nigeria (GHAIN) is organizing Nigeria's diverse providers into a referral network.

"We have never been involved in referral, but now we have found an opportunity to really meet the needs of our audience," says Lawal Bolarinde Joseph, a Program Officer for the Nigeria Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

Under GHAIN's referral network, each organization—whether it be a workplace clinic, an HIV/AIDS support group or a tertiary hospital—knows what the others are doing and can refer clients to other groups for additional services. This creates multiple entry points to comprehensive care.

In each of the six states where GHAIN works, it has brought together all of the groups providing HIV services to share information about their services, identify a referral focal person for each institution, and create a referral directory. In many places, this was the first time community-based organizations and health care groups had met together.

Referral focal people are responsible for both setting up referrals between departments within their institution and for handling outgoing referrals to and incoming referrals from other institutions. This system immediately connects PLHAs with the full range of HIV/AIDS services available in their state. For example, a client who tests HIV positive at a secondary hospital may be referred for opportunistic infection management and nutrition care within the hospital and to PLHA support groups and home-based care providers outside of the hospital.

Each state will have a referral coordinator who receives copies of all of the referrals made by the referral focal people. Referral coordinators will keep records of all referrals, track patients and get feedback to make sure the system is working smoothly. GHAIN will build the capacity of groups within the referral network by training them in areas including treatment support, HIV prevention and antiretroviral adherence counseling.

ABOUT GHAIN

Funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the five-year Global HIV/AIDS Initiative Nigeria (GHAIN) is rapidly strengthening and expanding HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services in support of the Government of Nigeria's response to the epidemic. GHAIN's partners are: Family Health International (FHI), The American National Red Cross/Nigerian Red Cross Society (ARC/NRCS), The Axios Foundation, The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), The Futures Group, The German Leprosy and Tuberculosis Relief Association and Howard University's Pharmacists & Continuing Education (PACE) Center.

GHAIN's seven main partners work with a growing number of associate partners, including the Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN).

GHAINing Ground is the quarterly newsletter of the Global HIV/AIDS Initiative Nigeria. The publication highlights program activities being implemented in Nigeria by GHAIN's international and local partners.

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