Addressing the Critical Need for Pharmacist-Based HIV/AIDS Services in Southern Africa
Imbi Ichile, PharmD, Nicole Butts, PharmD, Jamie Holmes, PharmD, James Alexander, PharmD, Joseph Barone, PharmD, Humberto Jimenez, PharmD, Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ

Background

The alarming incidence of HIV/AIDS in southern Africa has placed a severe strain on the region. Contributing to the crisis is a shortage of, and increasing demand for, trained healthcare professionals, particularly pharmacists. Number and complexity of patients have left little or no time for pharmacists to develop comprehensive pharmacy services. Described here are challenges and achievements experienced by a Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) resident in developing expanded pharmacy services and programs in southern Africa.

Methodology

A unique pharmacy practice residency entailing 6 months in southern Africa was created through a partnership between Rutgers University and Bristol-Myers Squibb’s Secure the Future. Using a stepwise work plan (Chart 1), the PharmD resident developed capacity-building programs for the provision of pharmacy services beyond dispensing.

Activities targeted...

1. Enhanced patient counseling through HIV support group education
2. Improved treatment management using a novel drug monitoring tool (Figure 1)
3. Bolstered provider practical knowledge through concept-driven and topic-specific presentations

Evaluation

At program conclusion, the PharmD resident conducted participant survey at one of the main work sites (Senkatana Centre) to determine favorability of program (Tables 1,2,3)

Scope of Work

Primary Sites

Key Activities

• Operational Observation
• Idea Generation with National Health Training College (ADR Tracking, Pharmacy Staff Retention)
• Development of HIV Support Group Education Program
• Development of ARV Pharmacovigilance Spreadsheet Program (drug monitoring/patient tracking tool) (Figure 1)
• Modular skills training for pharmacy technicians/assistants
• World AIDS Day @ Baragwanath
• Rutgers Fellows Charitable Contributions to HIV Support Groups and Child Care Centers
• National Pharmacy Week Co-Coordinator (Rural School Visits, Large-scale Health Fair, Hospital Waiting Area Presentations)

Discussion/Limitations

The residency demonstrated that...

• There is an acute need for pharmacists in the fight against HIV/AIDS in southern Africa
• Sustainable programs incorporate stakeholders at all levels; national, local, and institutional

Limitations included...

• Lack of facility space
• Insufficient time
• Frequent scheduling conflicts

Evaluation revealed that...

• Majority showed favorable opinion of the pilot PharmD skills transfer program
• All acknowledged the need for the information presented and would like to see its continuation
• One observer was dissatisfied with relevance of pharmacy continuing education, though all program users were satisfied

From PharmD Resident...

• Broaden health campaigns (i.e. smoking cessation, cancer)
• Deepen commitment to primary health care
• Expand relationship with traditional healers
• Expand program to sites in Namibia, Swaziland, and West Africa

From Program Participants/Observers...

• Further education and more time on program
• Education on dispensing and stock management, including: importance of keeping stock records, “first in-first-out” methods, expiration dates, and stock serial numbers
• Better workshop setting without disturbing elements
• More rewards for completion of modules and staff participation

Next Steps

• Continue follow-up analysis of the drug monitoring tool, including coordination with pharmacy and data management personnel
• Continue development of comprehensive care programs
• Collaborate with physicians on chart reviews and development of operational research strategies
• Foster more government support

Conclusion

• Skills transfer programs that utilize pharmacists’ drug expertise and public health awareness are invaluable
• Feedback from program observers/participants is essential for providing key improvements for the future

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Senkatana Centre Staff, Phangisile Mtshali, BMS Director of External Affairs, and John Damonti, BMS VP of Corporate Philanthropy