Community antiretroviral therapy dispensation in Cameroon associated with improved perceived service quality: a national evaluation

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BACKGROUND

The Government of Cameroon adopted community antiretroviral (ARV) drug dispensation in 2016 to improve HIV treatment continuity. One approach was to dispense ARVs through community-based organizations (CBOs) in which some health facilities providing antiretroviral therapy offered clients the option to receive ARV drug refills at CBOs. The Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and the Government of Cameroon evaluated the model. We describe the impact of the model on clients' perceived quality of HIV services.

METHODS

The evaluation was conducted from October to December 2020 in 10 regions of Cameroon. The selection of health facilities and CBOs considered regional variations in the number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) and facilities (Figures 1 and 2^{1}). We compared measured wait time for HIV services and perceived client satisfaction with services as proxies for service quality between clients receiving ARV refills at health facilities (n=557 clients) and at 50 CBO pickup sites (n=293 clients). Wait time and satisfaction among clients were also assessed at three matched pairs of health facilities: three facilities offering the CBO model ("offering facilities") (n=170 clients) and three facilities that did not offer the CBO model ("non-offering facilities) (n=170 clients). Perceived satisfaction and wait time were collected through a client survey and a time log. Descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted.



EPE280

Number of PLHIV and treatment coverage in Cameroon

RESULTS

CBO dispensation was associated with shorter wait times. Mean difference in wait time for clients receiving ARV refills from CBOs was 37.5 minutes less (CI:29.05–45.95, p-value=0.000) than at health facilities. Between the matched pairs, wait time for clients receiving refills at facilities offering the CBO model was 12.9 minutes less than at facilities that did not offer the CBO model (CI:-19.07– -6.10, p-value<0.000) (Table 1). Clients receiving refills at CBOs were 4.5 times more likely to report satisfaction with services than those at facilities offering the CBO model (97.3% vs. 89.1%, CI:2.12–9.42, p-value \leq 0.000). Similarly, clients receiving refills at facilities offering the CBO model were 6.26 times more likely to report satisfaction with services than those at non-offering facilities (94.4% vs. 73.1%, CI: 3.13–12.54, p-value <0.000) (Table 2).

CONCLUSIONS

Community ARV dispensation through CBOs was associated with shorter wait times for HIV services and higher client satisfaction than in facilities offering the CBO model, and higher client satisfaction in facilities offering the CBO model than at facilities not offering the CBO model. ARV dispensation through CBOs has the potential to improve perceived service quality both for clients who receive ARV refills at CBOs and those who continue to obtain refills at facilities that offer the CBO model.

TABLE 1. Mean time clients spent visiting health facilities and CBOs

CBO*	HEALTH FACILITY	COEFFICIENT	P-VALUE

REFERENCE

¹ PEPFAR. Cameroon country operational plan (COP) 2020, strategic direction summary. 2020 Mar 23.

Mean time spent (min)	35 (n=288)	74 (n=892)	37.5 (29.05 – 45.95)	<0.000
Mean time spent for ART pickup only (min)	35 (n=234)	71 (n=753)	35 (26.29 – 44.31)	<0.000
	Offering Facility (n=3)	Non-Offering Facility (n=3)*		
Mean time spent (min)	37 (n=200)	50 (n=490)	-12.9 (-19.07 – -6.10)	<0.000
Mean time spent for ART pickup only (min)	29 (n=150)	49 (n=440)	-20 (-26.8 – -12.6)	<0.000

* = Reference group

TABLE 2. Comparison of client satisfaction with quality of HIV care between CBO and health facility, and between health facility with CBO and one without CBO

FACILITY TYPE	SATISFIED (%)	P-VALUE	OR (CI)
СВО	97.34 (n=293)	<0.000	4.47 (2.12 – 9.42)
Health Facility*	89.12 (n=557)		1.0
Offering Facility	94.44 (n=170)	<0.000	6.26 (3.13 – 12.54)
Non-Offering Facility*	73.1 (n=170)		1.0

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* = Reference group

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