

Abstract

This study assessed the factors influencing retention in care of HIV/AIDS patients at the Bwizibwera HIV clinic in Kashari County, Mbarara District, Uganda.

The study objectives were mainly:

1. To determine socio-demographic factors affecting client retention in care at Bwizibwera HIV clinic among HIV/AIDS patients.
2. To assess institutional factors affecting client retention in care at Bwizibwera HIV Clinic among HIV/AIDS patients.
3. To establish community factors affecting retention in care at Bwizibwera HIV clinic among HIV/AIDS patients in Kashari County.
4. To identify geographical factors influencing retention in care among HIV/AIDS patients attending Bwizibwera HIV clinic and hence suggest possible strategies of promoting retention in care among patients on ART

This was a facility based cross sectional study design that used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data on socio-demographic, institutional, community and geographical factors affecting retention in care among patients attending Bwizibwera HIV Clinic. This study involved 255 respondents ever enrolled on ART for more than one year of whom 225 were still in care and 30 had been lost to follow up. The major significant socio demographic factors that affected client retention in care were sex, marital status, occupation and education. Clinical stage at ART initiation, number of visits to the clinic in a given period, quality of service and service satisfaction by respondents, disclosure, and channel used to access information and means of transport to the clinic were the other factors that influenced retention.

The study recommended formation of forums to support the married, divorced and widowed, promotion of disclosure to close confidants, individualized scheduling of patients return dates, use of radio messages with support from community leaders, peer educators and opinion leaders.

The study also recommended transfer of clients to nearby health facilities, use of outreach services as an alternative to reducing transport costs and early initiation of all HIV patients on ART.