

Gender, perceptions and experience of antiretroviral treatment in Cameroon

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Sida et Maladies associées

Research project

- Triomune® : a fixed dose combination generic antiretroviral medicine (lamivudine, stavudine, nevirapine) was used as a first line treatment
- Triomune® has been available in Cameroon since August 2001, first within a research trial that tested its efficacy (IRD UMR 145, MSF-Suisse, MSP-Cameroun)
- An anthropological study on the experience of the treatment
- Places : Hôpital de jour à l'Hôpital Central and Hôpital militaire (Yaounde)
- Funding agencies : ANRS, Sidaction



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Objectives

- Describe and analyse:
 - patients' experiences of an antiretroviral treatment, and study gender differences
 - men and women differences in health care workers' discourses
- Analyse differences between men and women regarding access to care, treatment, side effects.



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Methods

Ethnographic study:

- Observations
- Interviews:
 - 20 patients included in ANRS 1274 cohort
 - 12 health care workers in two hospitals in Yaounde, Cameroon
 - 5 representatives of associations (AFASO, REDS)
 - Interviewed in 2003, 2006 and 2007
- Documents



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Background information

- HIV prevalence : + 5% [4,9%-5,9%] in Cameroon (UNAIDS, 2006)
- 6,8% (women 15-49 years old) vs 4,1% (men 15-49 years old) (EDS, 2005)
- Percentage of HIV-infected women and men receiving antiretroviral therapy : 22% (WHO, 2006)
- Health centres where patients and health workers have been interviewed were the first delivered antiretroviral treatments since 2001 in Yaoundé, the capital city.



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Healthcare workers' discourses (1/3)

About access to care :

	Women	Men
Natural differences	<i>Receptiveness, consciousness</i>	<i>Lack of discipline and reluctance (shame, resistance to pain, fear of social stigma)</i>
Social differences	<i>Availability: unemployed or informal sector ; housewife</i>	<i>Responsibilities: professional activity; economic duties</i>



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Healthcare workers' discourses (2/3)

About care:

Women	Men
Accept sickness and treatment attributable to <i>survival instinct</i> Accept treatment because of child care	<i>Shame and fear of stigma</i> <i>Domination</i> in connection with AIDS testing <i>Refuse</i> to be sick, to take treatment, to come to hospital Refuse to divulge their status to their partner and their family



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Health care workers' discourses (3/3)

About experience of treatment

Women	Men
Integrate treatment into their life (speak about treatment with their family) Speak about side effects: lipoatrophy Ask doctors' advice when they want to change their treatment	Keep their treatment secret Stop their treatment independently (cases of discontinuance) Do not speak about side effects with their doctors.



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Discourses of women and men

1. Women's point of view about care

Men	Women
<i>Fear, ignorance, denial, shame, reluctance</i>	<i>Conscious and active ; able to bear sickness and treatment</i> <i>Child care ; speak to their family about sickness and treatment</i>

2. Men's point of view about care

Men	Women
<i>Strength in facing pain, lack of time, stay alone, suffer and be silent</i>	<i>Weakness, complain</i>



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Analysis : Gender and experience of the treatment (1/2)

- **Healthcare workers' and women's point of view:**
 - Men's difficulties: social (time, work), relationships (health workers, family) / natural (lack of discipline, reluctance)
 - Women's capacities: natural (availability, receptiveness), social (child care), relationships (health workers and family)
- **Men's point of view:**
 - Men's capacities (to bear suffering and pain)
 - Women's shortcomings: natural (complain about pain)



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Analysis: gender and experience of treatment (2/2)

- Women: they speak about treatment and side effects.
- Men: they have difficulties in waiting for care, in speaking about side effects and treatment, they refuse help and advice.
- Women: responsibility for care (of themselves, child, partner)



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Conclusions

- **Gender differences in experience of treatment:**
 - Social status for men and women
 - Male strength vs female weakness
 - Treatment, a « social object» for women vs an « object of stigma» for men
- **Difficulties for men in their experience of care and treatment.**



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Patients



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