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DO HIV + MOTHERS RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM THEIR FAMILIES?

Prof Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya, PhD
Research Director, Human Sciences Research Council, 44 Pickering Street,
Newton Park, Port Elizabeth, South Africa
Email:nphaswanamafuya@hsrc.ac.za

Introduction

Family is a significant and often indispensable component of the societal capacity to cope with social, economic and other stressors, such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Thus, family support is a critical component of the success of most HIV prevention programs, including PMTCT. This study sought to explore whether HIV+ mothers on the PMTCT program were receiving support from their families.

Summary of Methods

Indepth interviews were conducted with 22 PMTCT co-ordinators based in 22 health facilities of the Eastern Cape. An unstructured interview schedule was utilised for this purpose.

Results

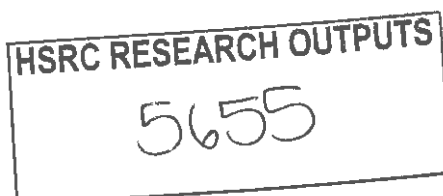
Participants indicated that below family cultural and traditional beliefs and practices affected family support for HIV+ mothers who are on the PMTCT program.

“Isicakathi” – Traditional drink given to new born baby

Participants indicated that sometimes babies do not receive NVP 72 hours after delivery because of the traditional belief that the new born baby should be given “isicakati” ((traditional drink) as their first feed for couple of days. It is believed that isicakathi cleanses the gut immediately after birth and improves the baby’s stools. It was indicated that one mother had poured isicakathi inside the baby’s feeding bottle. When asked why, she said: *“My mother in law said I should take out the baby’s first stool; most of such babies end up being admitted”*.

“Efukwini” - Home based postnatal care

Participants indicated that some mothers who deliver at home their families do not allow them to go to hospital 14 days following delivery as they are to receive “Efukwini” provided by their families. It is believed that the woman must stay



community outreach programmes is critical. Programmes which support and protect family networks, focusing in particular on reinforcing healthy family relationships, protecting and increasing family resources and strengthening the resilience of families and their ability to cope in changing environments are needed.