



## Understanding the Role of Public Health Centres in HIV/AIDS Care: A Focus on Awareness

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### DESCRIPTION

Public health centres play a potential role in providing comprehensive care and support to individuals living with HIV/AIDS. However, despite the availability of these resources, awareness among affected populations regarding the services provided at public health centres often remains inadequate.

#### The importance of public health centres

Public health centres serve as vital hubs for HIV/AIDS care, providing a range of services altered to the needs of affected individuals. These services typically include HIV testing and counselling, Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) initiation and management, opportunistic infection screening and treatment, mental health support, and adherence counselling. Additionally, public health centres often provide access to essential resources such as sterile syringes for injection drug users, and education on harm reduction practices.

#### Early diagnosis and linkage to care

One of the primary goals of public health centres is to facilitate early diagnosis of HIV infection and prompt linkage to care. Timely diagnosis allows individuals to initiate antiretroviral therapy early in the course of infection, leading to improved health outcomes and reduced risk of transmission to others. Public health centres provide confidential HIV testing and counselling services, ensuring privacy and sensitivity in the delivery of diagnostic results. Moreover, trained healthcare professionals provide guidance and support to newly diagnosed individuals, helping them navigate the complexities of living with HIV/AIDS.

#### Access to treatment and medication adherence

Once diagnosed, access to antiretroviral therapy is critical for managing HIV/AIDS and maintaining optimal health. Public

health centres serve as primary providers of ART, ensuring that individuals have access to life-saving medication regardless of their socioeconomic status. Moreover, healthcare providers at public health centres offer comprehensive adherence counselling, addressing barriers to medication adherence and promoting treatment adherence among patients. By promoting a supportive and non-judgmental environment, public health centres empower individuals to take control of their health and attach to their prescribed treatment regimens.

#### Prevention services and harm reduction

In addition to treatment and care, public health centres play a key role in HIV prevention efforts and harm reduction initiatives. Through education and outreach programs, these centres raise awareness about HIV transmission routes, risk reduction strategies, and the importance of regular testing. Public health centres also provide access to prevention tools such as condoms, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for high-risk individuals, and needle exchange programs for injection drug users. By addressing the underlying social determinants of health and promoting harm reduction practices, public health centres contribute to the overall reduction of new HIV infections within communities.

#### Mental health and psychosocial support

Living with HIV/AIDS can take a charge on an individual's mental and emotional well-being, often leading to feelings of stigma, isolation, and depression. Public health centres provide integrated mental health and psychosocial support services to address these challenges and promote holistic well-being. Trained counsellors and support groups provide emotional support, coping strategies, and peer connections to individuals living with HIV/AIDS. By addressing the psychosocial needs of patients, public health centres help promote the resilience and improve overall quality of life.

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**Received:** 01-May-2024, Manuscript No. HCCR-24-25803; **Editor assigned:** 03-May-2024, HCCR-24-25803 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 17-May-2024, QC No. HCCR-24-25803; **Revised:** 24-May-2024, Manuscript No. HCCR-24-25803 (R); **Published:** 31-May-2024, DOI: 10.35248/2375-4273.24.12.406

**Citation:** Duthely S (2024) Understanding the Role of Public Health Centres in HIV/AIDS Care: A Focus on Awareness. Health Care Curr Rev. 12:406.

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### Community engagement and empowerment

Effective engagement with affected communities is essential for the success of public health centre initiatives aimed at HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and peer networks play a potential role in raising awareness about the services provided at public health centres and linking individuals to care. By involving affected communities in program planning, implementation, and evaluation, public health centres ensure that services are culturally appropriate, responsive to community needs, and accessible to all.

Raising awareness about public health centres for HIV/AIDS patients is essential for ensuring that individuals have access to the care and support they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives. By providing comprehensive services, including early diagnosis, access to treatment, prevention services, mental health support, and community engagement, public health centres play a pivotal role in the global response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Through targeted education, outreach, and collaboration with affected communities, by strengthening the awareness of public health centre resources and empower individuals to take control of their health and well-being.