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Effects of an HIV-care-program on immunological parameters in HIV-positive patients in Yaounde, Cameroon: A cluster randomized trial

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Background: Results from previous studies have demonstrated the beneficial impact of nutritional supplements on immunological parameters; however, they are expensive and unaffordable by the majority of HIV patients in Sub-Saharan Africa and the effectiveness with local food has not been established.

Objective: To verify the HIV-Care-Program (HCP-Cam) based on nutrition and lifestyle modification that can improve relevant clinical and anthropometrical parameters, health status, quality of life and that can be provided to the majority of HIV-infected people.

Method: A cluster randomized trial conducted from June 2010 till December 2012, included 5 health facilities (HF), randomized either to the intervention (HCP-Cam) or the control group, (Usual-Care-Treatment (UCT-Cam)). HIV patients between 20 and 72 years, CD4 counts >350 cells/ μ l, viral load <100.000 cells/ μ l and no antiretroviral therapy (ARV), were enrolled. The intervention group received the HCP-Cam consisting of individual and group counseling of participants on: "Nutrition", "Hygiene" and "Coping with stigma and discrimination". Two lessons were offered, each lasting 11/2 hours/week over 6 months. Lessons were accompanied by practical activities such as shopping tours at local markets, cookery seminars on regional high quality food and workshops on healthy lifestyle. The control group was treated as usual. The main study outcomes were changes in initial CD4 cells after 6 months and initiation of ARV. Secondary outcomes were changes in initial malondialdehyde and albumin concentrations after 6 months.

Results: 201 participants were enrolled and followed-up for 24 months. After 6 months, the mean CD4 cell count dropped by 16% more in the control compared to the 3 Samstag, 25-April 2015. Intervention group ($P=0.003$) and 9 participants in the intervention group were initiated to ARV compared to 35 in the control group ($p=0.020$). There was a negative correlation between CD4 cell count after 6 months and initial viral load, $r=-0.143$, $p<0.037$.

Biography

Heike Englert is the Founder and Consultant of the Coherence Foundation (Competence Center for Health Management in Cooperation and Public Health). She is the Professor of Public Health (especially chronic diseases such as Type-2 Diabetes) and Therapeutic Nutrition at the University of Applied Sciences in Muenster, Germany.

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