

IMPROVING  
UTILIZATION OF WORKPLACE  
HIV/AIDS PROGRAMME FOR HEALTH  
CARE WORKERS AT PELONOMI  
HOSPITAL

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## BACKGROUND

- The study was conducted at Pelonomi Regional Hospital, which employs 1900 health care workers (HCW).
- The researchers are four professional nurses who are also representatives of the Health and Safety Committee (HSC).
- The HSC is made up of representatives from management, the unions and the employees
  - It is responsible for identifying workplace risks and hazards, and making recommendations to rectify them
- All activities implemented by the Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) unit are coordinated by the HSC



# UTILISATION OF OHS SERVICES

- From January to May 2011 an audit at Pelonomi showed how the HCWs utilize OHS services
  - Hepatitis B Immunization = 568
  - Primary Health care = 405
  - Medical surveillance = 314
  - **HIV Counseling and Testing = 121**
  - Tuberculosis = 42
  - Injury on duty = 41



# HIV & AIDS SERVICES OFFERED BY OHS UNIT

- Prior Nov 2011 the OHS unit provided:
  - HIV counseling and testing (HCT)
  - HIV-positive HCWs were referred to the Centre of Excellence
- From **Nov 2011 to date** the OHS unit implements a **Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Programme** with:
  - HCT
  - Routine monitoring of CD4 count
  - Drug readiness and initiation of Treatment



# AIM

In keeping with International and National guidelines our aim is to **improve utilization of the workplace HIV & AIDS programme by health care workers at Pelonomi Hospital**



## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify staff perceptions of OHS unit and its services, as well as factors that contribute to HIV & AIDS-related stigma in the workplace
- To investigate why health care workers (HCW) at Pelonomi Hospital under-utilize the occupational health service (OHS) unit for HIV counseling and testing (HCT)
- To determine what can be done to improve HCW's use of the OHS unit for HIV counseling and testing, and to explore how OHS services could be improved.



## RESEARCH METHOD

- Questionnaires were designed.....
  - With closed- and open-ended questions
  - Translated, back-translated
  - Piloted and then adapted where needed
  - Distributed to a stratified sample representing all staff occupations, sexes, races and ages
- Participants filled in the questionnaires (self-administered)
- Data were cleaned, entered into SPSS and analysed
- Formal ethics approval was obtained from UFS.
- All permissions were secured from Pelonomi management, Unit managers and Unions



## RESULTS

- 18.1% (n=344) of Pelonomi's 1900 HCWs completed the survey
- Results are grouped as follows:
  - Perceptions of...
    - HIV and AIDS in the workplace
    - OHS Services
    - OHS staff
    - Stigma
    - Confidentiality
  - Recommendations





## RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS ON HIV AND AIDS

- Only 33.5% of HCW would want to know their HIV status
- If they were informed that they were HIV-positive:
  - 38.5% would change their sexual behavior
  - 32.2% would change their work practices
  - 72.9% would want to get treatment as soon as possible
- Few HCWs would share this information with anyone at work including their....
  - occupational health nurse (8%),
  - close co-workers (5.1%),
  - union representative (5.4%),
  - supervisor (5.6%)
  - and friends (5.9%).
- 4.5% would not share the information with anyone



## RESULTS: HIV AND AIDS IN THE WORKPLACE

**If a boss found out that a staff member is HIV-positive.....**

- **The largest percentage (37%) felt their boss would be supportive**
- 28.9% thought that their boss would encourage them to get treatment
- 18% thought their boss would encourage them to follow all procedures and protect themselves
- 10% indicated their relationship would stay the same
- **Few thought that there would be negative reactions that would threaten their work**



## RESULTS: OHS SERVICES

- 82.2% knew where the OHS unit is located
- 69.6% knew the operating times for the OHS unit
- 57.6% knew that HIV treatment is available at the OHS unit
- 62.4% knew that TB treatment is available at the OHS unit
- 64.1% believe that HCW use the OHS unit's HIV and AIDS programme effectively



## RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS ON OHS STAFF

- 71.3% agree that OH practitioners are well-trained to offer HCT
- 70.4% agree that OH practitioners encourage people to use the OHS unit for HIV and AIDS services
- When asked to comment on the training and attitude of OHS staff, three themes emerged:
  - A perception exists that confidentiality is not always maintained by staff
  - OHS staff should be more supportive
  - OHS staff should provide training and education on HIV and AIDS



## RESULTS: STIGMA

- 62.9% do not believe that there is stigma in the workplace, but 37.1% believe that there is stigma most or all of the time
  - 50% of women thought this was a problem and 30% of men thought this was a problem
  - Since women represent the majority of health workers, this finding is important for OHS programming
- When asked what could be done to reduce stigma four main themes emerged:
  - More training needed via workshops held by the OHS unit for health workers
  - Support groups for health care workers (care of carers)
  - People should not stigmatize one another
  - HIV and AIDS education for all employees, including OHS staff

## RESULTS: CONFIDENTIALITY

- 71.2% of participants believe that confidentiality is maintained at the OHS unit most or all of the time
- Qualitative data suggest that HCW do not access HIV services at OHS unit....
  - For fear that confidentiality would not be maintained
  - Not given enough time during the work day to go to OHS unit
  - Concern that the worker will have to pay for services (despite this service being free of charge)



# RESEARCH PROCESS & LIMITATIONS

- Not all analysis has been done
  - For example since we found that there were many reasons why HIV service was underutilized there could be more analysis on the association between questions such as those on stigma and confidentiality
- Participants said the questionnaire was long.



## CONCLUSIONS

Health-care workers may be under-utilizing HIV & AIDS-related OHS services due to:


- Fear of being stigmatized
- Fear of breach of confidentiality
  - It can be that policies are not being implemented properly
- Not enough awareness of HIV & AIDS related services provided by OHS unit
- Misconception and attitudes towards HIV & AIDS related services provided by the unit





## RECOMMENDATIONS

When asked how to improve access of health workers to HIV, prevention, treatment and care, suggestions included....

- Strengthening existing systems – access; quality; coverage; efficiency
  - Education, training and development for OHS staff and health workers
  - OHS staff to maintain confidentiality
  - Awareness of what the OHS unit does
  - Empower health care workers to reduce stigma
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**Thank You!**

**Re a leboha!**

**Dankie!**

**Siyabulela!**

**Merci!**

