

University of Gondar Teaching Hospital (UGTH) , Ethiopia

Workshop: Application of Telemedicine in the fight against HIV/AIDS: Ethiopia's Context

Mission: "Advancing Telemedicine Knowledge for Poverty Eradication"

1. About UGTH

The University of Gondar has been inaugurated just two years back but its teaching hospital has been there for over half a decade along with the College of Medicine and Health Sciences. The teaching hospital and the college have served as the training berth for thousands of health professionals in different fields including medicine, nursing and laboratory technology. However, the role of the college hasn't been confined only to training of health personnel. It has a long and proud history of working with the community to alleviate their health problems through prevention and treatment. Its effort has been internationally recognized when the college was chosen to win the Sasakawa Global 2000 award.

But still the challenges remain. And, the emergence of HIV/AIDS hasn't made its task any easier.

2. Workshop Issues and Concept

In the workshop that we plan to conduct, the emphasis would primarily be on the advantages of telemedicine to the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS in the Ethiopian context. Extending the health service to rural areas and what telemedicine could offer in this regard will be major topics of focus. However, the same workshop will also setup a committee that would prepare a draft proposal for the initiation of a telemedicine project focusing on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.

3. Background

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world with an estimated population of over 60 million. The great percentage of the population (85%) resides in the rural areas where the health service coverage is hugely compromised. Just like the case in most developing countries, health personnel in Ethiopia are mostly concentrated in major towns and cities. This fact has left the rural areas of the country at a huge disadvantage, making the people living there vulnerable to the evil effects of ignorance and its consequent ill-health.

The HIV/AIDS situation in Ethiopia is one of the worst and worrying health challenges in the world. With an HIV infection prevalence rate of 6.6 percent nationally, and 3.7 percent in the rural areas, it is clear that an urgent and effective intervention is in order. Anything less than this would beckon the impending disaster.

Most countries that managed to put hold on the HIV crisis managed to do so mostly through information - appropriate information, at the right time and at the right place.

Information on all aspects of HIV/AIDS including, ways of transmission and precautionary measures that should be observed, treatment of HIV/AIDS and other related issues need to be effectively communicated to the entire public. Information provision is, in fact, the first step to the much sought after positive behavioral change.

However, it's not only the public that needs relevant and up-to-date information. Rural health stations are often vacated, with doctors and nurses seeking employment in cities. Researches have shown that one of the multitude of factors for such an exodus is the "feeling of professional isolation." Medical knowledge keeps growing and is changing at a great speed, and this needs to be communicated to health professionals for better management of patients, successful research endeavors and productive academic exercise. Unfortunately, the physical distance is commonly a barrier to effective and timely information exchange.

4. Brief Workshop Summary

The workshop aims to actualize the following:

- To create awareness on telemedicine
- To examine telemedicine as a feasible and effective adjuvant to the existing health system in Ethiopia
- To lay the foundation for initiation of a project on telemedicine that is targeted on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS

5. Plan of Action

5.1 Date and Duration:

The workshop will be held for three days. The date can be fixed in consultation with international and local experts so as to assure their presence in the workshop.

5.2 Expected Budget: See Annex I

5.3 Future Plan on Financing:

One of the outcomes of the workshop that we aim for is the establishment of a committee that would work to draft a proposal for the initiation of telemedicine project focusing on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. With the completion of the proposal, we plan to apply for the Japanese government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) fund for its implementation.

ANNEX I

Items	US Dollar	Remark
Venue	450 (150 per day)	
Equipment Rental	150 (50 per day)	
Conference Dinner	60 persons x 8	
Entertainment	1 x 60 persons x 3 days	
Per Diem	Local 10 x 60 persons x 5 days	
	International 100 USD x 10 persons x 5	
Printing	130	
Air Transport Round Trip (Local)	60 persons x 125	
Air Transport (International)	3,000 USD x 10 persons	
Accommodation	10 x 60 persons x 3 days	