

## Factors Influencing the Choice of Multi-Month Drug Dispensing Model Amongst Children and Adolescents Living with HIV (C/ALHIV) in Eswatini

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**Abstract :** Background: The Sub-Saharan Africa region has the greatest number of people eligible to receive antiretroviral treatment (ART). Multi-month Drug dispensing (MMD) of antiretroviral treatment (ART) aims to reduce patient-related barriers to access long-term treatment and improve health system efficiency. In Eswatini, however, few children and adolescents are on MMD. Young Heroes is implementing an HIV program that aims to avert new HIV infections in children and youth and improve treatment outcomes for children and adolescents living with HIV (C/ALHIV: 0-19 Years) and OVC caregivers with HIV prevention and impact mitigation interventions that prevent new HIV infections and reduce vulnerability. Aim of the study: The study aimed to ascertain factors that are associated with the assignment of the MMD model on C/ALHIVs. Methodology: The project provides treatment adherence support through well-trained community cadres (Home Visitors - HVs) at both community and health facility levels. During door-to-door visits, HVs track all C/ALHIV enrolled in the project monthly and refer any who might have stopped or interrupted treatment. C/ALHIV with unsuppressed viral load is supported through case conferencing and teen clubs. A quantitative cross-sectional analysis was conducted using STATA for children and adolescents living with HIV enrolled in the project. Bivariate analysis was conducted, and the Logistic Regression model was used to ascertain the effects of duration on ART on the choice of MMD model. Results: Data for 544 C/ALHIV (0-19 Years) was analyzed in STATA. Results show a strong association between (duration on ART, Age, being in teen club) and enrolment in an MMD model. Duration on ART is a major predictor for the choice of MMD model at (95% CI: 0.0012905 - 0.0039812; P = <0.0001). C/ALHIV who have been on ART for less than a year are less likely to be on MMD. C/ALHIVs who are 1 or more years on ART are more likely to be in 3 months dispensing, while those who are 5 years or more are most likely to be in 6 months model.

**Keywords :** C/ALHIV, OVC, HIV, treatment

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