



SMART CONNECTIONS Social Media to improve ART Retention and Treatment Outcomes Among Youth Living with HIV in Nigeria

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SMART Connections

What

- Structured, online support group
- Curriculum adapted from “Positive Connections”

Who

- Youth living with HIV, ages 15-24 years, new to ART (<12 month)

Where

- 14 health facilities in south-central Nigeria



How It Works



Safe Space: YLHIV ages 15 to 24 form “**Secret**” Facebook groups.



Supportive Adult Role Model: Groups led by trained adult facilitator with lived HIV experience.



11 Key Topics Covered: Understanding HIV; Treatment & Adherence; Disclosure; Exploring Feelings; Nutrition & Health; Reproductive Rights; Positive Health Dignity & Prevention; Stigma, Discrimination & Rights; Violence; Communication & Problem Solving; Planning for your Future.



Interactive Polls and Facilitated Discussions test knowledge and reinforce learning.



Word-of-the-Week and Key Message images provide definitions of core concepts.



Social Activities including riddles, puzzles, and discussion about non-health topics to promote bonding.

Informational Messaging:

February 13 at 12:42 AM

Which of the following does not NOT transmit HIV?

- Insect/mosquito
- From mother to baby when the mum is pregnant
- Through sex
- From mother to baby through breasts milk

+ Add option

8 10 Comments Seen by 13

Like Comment

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Insects and mosquitoes

Insect and mosquitoes

February 17 at 10:44 AM

"Hi everyone! These are some of the things that we will talk about in this session."

KEY MESSAGES: Treatment and Adherence

- ART can lower how much HIV is in the blood and helps people with HIV stay healthy.
- ART can stop working if you do not take it every day.
- ART can make some people feel badly. If this happens to you, don't stop taking it. Talk to your doctor.

and 9 others 8 Comments Seen by 15

February 13 at 12:54 PM

"There are many places in your community that offers social support; some people find support from religious groups. This story is about a young woman named Irene with questions about ARTs and her religion."

Irene and Religion



My name is Irene. I am 16 years old and I really enjoy going my worship center. I also have HIV. At my last visit, the doctor told me to take ART every day.



I was worried that taking medicine would disobey my religion. My religious leader, Isaac, spoke about the amazing healing powers of prayer during a service last week.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Worship			Prayer			
Worship			Prayer			
Worship			Prayer			
Worship			Prayer			
Worship			Prayer			

I was not sure what to do. The doctor was very firm and clear about the dangers of not taking ART. This made me scared, but I did not want to go against my religion either.

I decided to talk to Isaac to get his point of view. I found a good time to talk to Isaac in private.

Isaac and the other members do not know that I have HIV. I was worried people would gossip.

That's a good one, one can't do without taking his/her art everyday it's very important

Findings from Feasibility Study

- Facilitators and YLHIV strongly supported and liked the intervention
- Participants:
 - Felt that the intervention was easy to access and useful
 - Reported that they enjoyed taking part in it
 - Felt comfortable with the facilitator and group members
 - Wanted to continue the intervention
 - Would recommend the intervention to other ALHIV
- Facilitators completed most scheduled activities on-time, as intended and felt using Facebook on phones was easy

“I am a very timid and shy person. But the intervention helped me. There are certain things I was able to overcome. I felt so miserable when I found out that I’m positive but after interacting with people, I find out that I don’t have to kill myself or die or feel miserable ...So I have decided to open up and feel good about myself.” - 18-year-old female

Next Steps

- RCT to test effectiveness underway
- 350 youth 15-24 years enrolled
- Primary outcome: Retention in ART services
- Secondary outcomes:
 - Adherence
 - Social Support
- Baseline data collected, endline starting May 2019

