ABSTRACT

Summary Background People with HIV accessing antiretroviral therapy (ART) have persistent physical, psychological, social, and spiritual problems, which are associated with poor quality of life and treatment outcomes. We assessed the effectiveness of a nurse-led palliative care intervention on patient-reported outcomes. Methods We did this randomised controlled trial at a clinic in Kenya for adults with HIV, established on ART, and reporting moderate-to-severe pain or symptoms. We randomly assigned participants (1:1) either to a palliative care intervention (including assessments of physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing and quality of life) given six times over 4 months, or to usual care. Participants and investigators were not masked to allocation. The primary outcome was pain (scored on the African Palliative Care Association's African Palliative Outcome Scale). This trial is registered with ClinicalTrials.gov, number NCT01608802. Findings We screened 2070 patients, of whom we enrolled 120: 60 allocated to each group. In the control group, median pain score improved from 1·0 (IQR 0·0–2·0) at baseline to 5·0 (3·0–5·0) at 4 months; in the intervention group, it improved from 1·0 (0·0–2·0) at baseline to 4·5 (3·0–5·0) at 4 months. Compared with standard care, the intervention had no significant effect on pain (coefficient −0·01, 95% CI −0·36 to 0·34, p=0·95). Interpretation A nurse-led palliative care intervention was not effective in reducing pain. However, person-centred assessment and care delivered by staff who have received additional training had positive effects on self-reported mental health related quality of life and psychosocial wellbeing. Funding Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. Correspondence to: Dr Richard Harding, King's College London, Cicely Saunders Institute, Department of Palliative Care, Policy and Rehabilitation Bessemer Road, London SE5 9PJ, UK Copyright © 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved. Note to users: Corrected proofs are Articles in Press that contain the authors' corrections. Final citation details, e.g., volume and/or issue number, publication year and page numbers, still need to be added and the text might change before final publication. Although corrected proofs do not have all bibliographic details available yet, they can already be cited using the year of online publication and the DOI, as follows: author(s), article title, Publication (year), DOI. Please consult the journal's reference style for the exact appearance of these elements, abbreviation of journal names and use of punctuation. When the final article is assigned to an volumes/issues of the Publication, the Article in Press version will be removed and the final version will appear in the associated published volumes/issues of the Publication. The date the article was first made available online will be carried over.