Evaluating the uptake, acceptability, and effectiveness of Uliza! clinicians' HIV hotline: a telephone consultation service in Kenya

Abstract:

Many clinical sites that serve patients who are HIV positive face challenges of insufficient staffing levels and staff training and have limited access to consultation resources including specialists on site. Uliza! (Swahili for "ask") Clinicians' HIV Hotline was launched in April 2006 in Nyanza province in Kenya as a HIV telephone consultation service for healthcare providers. Hotline users called an Uliza! consultant who discussed the patients' problems and helped the caller work through a solution, as well as reinforced national guidelines. This objective of this study was to evaluate the uptake, acceptability, and effectiveness of Uliza! Consultants completed a form with details of each call, and healthcare workers completed satisfaction surveys during site visits. All available medical records were audited to determine whether the advice given by the consultant was implemented. After a year of service, Uliza! responded to 296 calls. Clinical officers (64%) followed by nurses (21%) most frequently used the service. Most callers had questions regarding antiretroviral therapy (36%) or tuberculosis (18%). Thirty-six percent of all consults were pediatric questions. Ninety-four percent of users rated the service as useful. Advice given to providers was implemented and documented in the medical records in 72% of the charts audited. Healthcare providers in HIV clinics will use a telephone consultation service when easily accessible. Clinicians using Uliza! found it useful, and advice given was usually implemented. Uliza! increased access to current information for quality care in a rural and resource limited setting and has potential for scale-up to a national level.