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Analysis of Early Deaths among HIV Patients Admitted to the Medical Emergency Department of CHU Treichville in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)

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Abstract: Introduction: The occurrence of deaths among HIV-positive patients in the Medical Emergency Services (MES) is frequent but has been poorly studied in Côte d'Ivoire. This study aimed to determine the mortality rate among HIV patients and identify factors associated with early deaths of patients admitted to emergency services. Materials and Methods: This was a retrospective cohort study conducted from March 1, 2022, to February 29, 2023 (a 1-year period) at the MES of Treichville. Included in the study were patients admitted for HIV-related complications and those newly diagnosed with HIV at MES. Excluded were HIV-positive patients who died upon arrival (arrival time < 1 hour). The parameters studied included reasons for admission, sociodemographic variables (age, sex, HIV status), clinical variables (medical conditions, clinical stage according to WHO 2007, CD4 count), and the mortality rate. Data analysis was performed using Epi Info software. Results: Among 4,036 admissions to MES, 221 patients (prevalence 5.48%) were HIV-positive. The mean age was 35 (± 0.9) years, with a sex ratio of 0.75 and an age range of 16 to 78 years. There was a predominance of females (n=126). Patients already diagnosed as HIV-positive prior to admission accounted for 79.60% of the sample, among whom 60.80% were non-adherent to antiretroviral treatment. The most common reasons for admission were altered consciousness (45.7%), respiratory distress (24.4%), and diarrhea (11.8%). Cerebral toxoplasmosis (26.7%) and pulmonary tuberculosis (15.8%) were the most frequently diagnosed conditions. Patients with CD4 counts < 200 (OR= 0.4003; CI= 0.1875-0.8135, p=0.007706) and WHO stage > 2 (OR= 0.38; CI= 0.1934-0.7611, p=0.0036) had poorer outcomes. The mortality rate was 26.7%. Conclusion: Early deaths occurred predominantly among young adults. The mortality rate was high, underscoring the need to establish voluntary testing centers nationwide and provide support for people living with HIV. Decreased immunity contributes to the occurrence of HIV-related complications.

Keywords: HIV-related complications – Mortality – Poor adherence to ART and cotrimoxazole – Medical emergencies at CHU Treichville.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2022, UNAIDS estimated the number of AIDS-related deaths at 630,000 individuals [1]. These deaths result from HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection and occur in a clinically complex context involving the failure of multiple systems and organs [2]. This represents a major public health issue worldwide, particularly in developing countries [1, 2].

According to Kra et al. [3], in the Department of Infectious and Tropical Diseases at the CHU Treichville (SMIT), severe immune system failure is observed in almost all patients living with HIV (92.4% with a CD4 count < 350 cells/mm³ and 59.7% with a CD4 count < 100 cells/mm³).

An earlier study focused on the management of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in the Medical Emergency Services at CHU Treichville [4]. However, the prognostic aspect and the associated determinants were not addressed. Moreover, given the advancements in HIV management in recent years, these studiesdating back more than a decade—do not adequately reflect the current situation of PLHIV in MES.

The objective of this study was to determine the mortality rate of HIV patients overall, stratified by complications or opportunistic infections, to identify factors associated with early deaths of patients admitted to emergency services for HIV.

METHODOLOGY

Study Setting

This study was conducted in the Medical Emergency Services (MES) at CHU Treichville. The department includes a resuscitation room with four beds.

Study Type and Period

This was a retrospective cohort study carried out from March 1, 2022, to February 29, 2023 (a period of one year).

Study Population

We included all patient records of people living with HIV (PLHIV) admitted for complications and those who tested positive for HIV, confirmed by Western Blot, in the MES. Excluded were records of HIV patients with incomplete information and those who died less than one hour after admission.

For each patient, we analyzed the following:

- Sociodemographic variables: Age, sex, marital status, lifestyle, and whether HIV was newly diagnosed or previously known at the time of admission.
- Medical history: Opportunistic infections, comorbidities (hypertension, diabetes), use of antiretroviral therapy (ART) and/or prophylaxis with Sulfamethoxazole + Trimethoprim (PST) prior to admission, and lifestyle habits (smoking, alcohol use).
- Clinical variables: Reason for admission, medical conditions, clinical stage according to WHO 2007 [5], and therapeutic data (ARV and/or cotrimoxazole prophylaxis).
- Paraclinical examinations: Complete blood count, blood urea, creatinine levels, CD4 count at diagnosis, toxoplasmosis serology, brain CT scan, and chest CT scan with or without contrast injection, depending on the patient's medical history and clinical examination.

The 1993 CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Atlanta classification was used to correlate the progressive stage (death) of HIV infection.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out using documents such as patient records, care registers, and patient registration logs from the Short-Stay Hospitalization Unit (UCDH). The information was transcribed onto a standardized individual survey form. Following this initial collection, patients were sorted according to our inclusion criteria.

Operational Definitions of Terms

Hyperleukocytosis: White blood cell (WBC) count $> 10 \times 10^3$ /mm³.

Leukopenia: WBC count $< 2 \times 10^{3}$ /mm³.

Anemia: Hemoglobin level < 7 g/dl.

Renal failure: Glomerular filtration rate (the volume of plasma filtered by the kidneys per unit of time) < 60 ml/min.

Pulmonary tuberculosis: Positive Gen Xpert test for Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MT) in sputum, gastric aspirates, or bronchial aspirations.

Cryptococcal meningitis: Presence of Cryptococcus neoformans in cerebrospinal fluid (CSF).

The following parameters were collected The evolution:

duration of hospitalization, the outcome of the patients. The patients evacuated from the medical emergency room to a hospitalization service were monitored at 30 days. The contact details (telephone numbers, email addresses) of the patients and/or one of the parents were recorded, for the occasion.

Identification of factors associated with early death using the Cox model:

Dependent variable: Death was considered HIV-related if the cause was an AIDS-defining event according to the 1993 CDC criteria.

Explanatory variables: Age, sex, reason for admission, and CD4 count.

Data entry was performed using Microsoft Word 2007 and analyzed with Epi Info version 7.2. Statistical tests included the Chi-squared test corrected by Yates and Fisher's exact test, with a p-value ≤ 0.05 considered significant.

Ethical and Administrative Considerations

Patient inclusion was conducted while ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

RESULTS

Epidemiological Characteristics:

We collected 221 records of patients admitted for HIV-related complications based on our inclusion criteria, out of a total of 4036 visits to the Emergency Medical Services (EMS), representing a frequency of 5.48%. Six patients were HIV-positive, but four records were incomplete, and two patients had died upon arrival (within the first hour). Patients who were not HIVpositive numbered 3809.

The age groups 36–45 years (40.3%) and 46–55 years (23.5%) (Young adults) were the most represented.

The average age was 35 ± 0.9 years, with ages ranging from 16 to 78. There was a predominance of females (n=126) and a sex ratio of 0.75. Patients came from home (62.3%), public health facilities (32.9%), and private health facilities (4.8%). Transport was nonmedicalized (95%) or medicalized (5%).

Medical History:

Patients living with HIV (PLHIV) prior to admission (n=176) accounted for 79.6% of the sample. Among them, 60.8% (n=107) were non-compliant with antiretroviral therapy (ART), and 22.2% (n=39) were non-compliant with cotrimoxazole prophylaxis (PST). Herbal concoctions were used as a substitute for ARV and PST in 112 patients, while 34 others resorted to prayer centers. HIV positivity was discovered in 123/176 cases during health checkups organized by their workplaces. Hypertension was identified in 3 former tuberculosis patients. Single individuals (43.43%) were the most infected, followed by married (26.69%) and divorced patients (22.17%).

Reasons for Admission:

The primary symptoms at admission were altered consciousness (45.2%), respiratory distress (24.4%), and diarrhea (11.8%), followed by fever (5.9%), anemia (5.43%), seizures (4.97%), and hemoptysis (1.81%).

Diagnoses:

Most patients (n=64) presented with radiological evidence suggesting cerebral abscesses (cerebral toxoplasmosis), with favorable outcomes after five days of cotrimoxazole treatment. Other pathologies included bacterial pneumonia (22.17%) and pulmonary tuberculosis (15.83%).

Analytical Results:

Patients with CD4 counts < 200 (OR= 0.4003; CI= 0.1875–0.8135; p=0.007706) and WHO stage > 2 (R= 0.38; OR= 0.1934–0.7611; p= 0.0036) had poorer outcomes.

According to the diagnoses, there was no statistical association between the deceased and surviving groups for tuberculosis, cerebral abscess, non-tuberculous bacterial pneumonia (p=1), renal failure (p=0.4824), or anemia (p=1). However, cerebral toxoplasmosis and gastroenteritis were associated with

death. Regarding reasons for admission, respiratory distress and neurological deterioration were linked to mortality. The average length of stay was 4 ± 2 days, with a median of 3 days (range: 1–9 days).

Patient Outcomes:

Sixty-two (n=62) patients (28.05%) were discharged home, while 100 (45.25%) were hospitalized in departments such as infectious diseases, internal medicine, and pneumology at the CHU of Treichville. The mortality rate was 26.7% (n=59), reaching 76.27% (n=45) among PLHIV before their admission to EMS.

Study Limitations:

This was a single-center study conducted over a short period, which does not reflect the factors associated with mortality among PLHIV across Côte d'Ivoire. Not all AIDS-defining events, as classified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1993, were considered in the EMS setting. Additionally, the impact of comorbidities (hypertension, diabetes, tobacco, alcohol) on clinical outcomes was not addressed in this study.

Author Contributions:

All authors contributed to conducting the research and have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

DISCUSSION

Our Sample focused on 221 Patient records admitted to the Emergency Medical Services (EMS):

Seniority of HIV, ARV Treatment, and non-Adherence:

Most patients (79.60%) were already aware of their HIV status, while 20.40% were diagnosed during their stay in the EMS (Table 1). The pathophysiology of HIV progresses over time, leading to decreased immunity and an increased risk of complications in individuals infected years earlier. Our results were higher than those reported by Kone [6] at the Bouake University Hospital Emergency Department, where 49.2% of patients were PLHIV and 42.2% were infected with HIV (screening in the emergency room).

Variables	Numbers	Pourcentage (%)
Sex M/F	95/126	43/57
Age(years)		
16-25	15	6,8
26-35	30	13,6
36-45	89	40,3
46-55	53	23,98
56-65	20	9,1
> 66	14	6.3

 Table 1: Epidemiological Data and Medical History of HIV-Positive Patients

Marital status		
Single	96	43,43
Married	59	26,69
Divorced	49	22,17
Widowed	17	7,69
Known HIV History	176	79,6
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	10	
Intercostal shingles	03	
Cerebral Toxoplasmosis	03	
Kaposi's Sarcoma	01	
Diabetes	05	
Hypertension	11	
Asthma	01	
Alcohol	01	
Smohing	03	
Anémia + Fever	18	
Unknown HIV History	45	20,36
Diabetes	02	
Hypertension	13	
Prostate Adénocarcinoma	01	
Asthma	03	
Alcohol	02	
Smoking	05	
No history	18	
	E famala	

M: male F : female

Reported adherence to ART was low in our study (39.20%) compared with the results of Mbopi-Kéou [7] in Cameroon and Coulibaly [8] in Mali, with adherence rates of 80.2% and 75.2% respectively. Although the factors limiting good adherence to ARV in these studies were dominated by forgetfulness, refusal and adverse effects, the frequent use of traditional medicine explained, in addition to these factors, the more marked non-adherence in our study. Most of our patients did not attend school and preferred the traditional treatments of street vendors. Nowadays, these vendors are numerous and use every means to attract customers while denigrating ARV treatment.

On the other hand, most of our patients were receiving cotrimoxazole prophylaxis (77.80%), similar to the results of Gourvellec [9] in 2004, with an overall

compliance rate of 77%. However, compliance was considered to be good and stable. The beneficial effect of cotrimoxazole chemoprophylaxis on the quality of life (prevention of opportunistic infections) of PLHIV is well established [10].

CD4 Counts:

Patients with CD4 counts below 200 cells/mm³ were the most represented group (61.5%) (Table 2). This proportion aligns with findings from Avakougjo in Senegal [11], who reported 57.14% of patients with CD4 < 200/mm³. Similarly, Albus *et al.* [12] in Guinea reported that 57% of their 401-patient cohort had a median CD4 count of 64 cells/mm³ upon admission. Profound immunosuppression at this stage of the disease explains the high frequency of observed complications [13].

Variables	Numbers ²	Perrcentage (%)
WHO clinical stage		
WHO 0	12	5,4
WHO 1	20	9
WHO 2	72	32,6
WHO 3	55	24,9
WHO 4	62	28,1
CD4 count		
≥ 500	7	3,2
200-499	78	35,3
< 200	136	61,5
Gen Xpert		
Positive / Negative	35 /186	15,8 / 84,2
Glasgow Score		
≤ 8	32	14,47

 Table 2: Paraclinical and Clinical Data and Length of Stay

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9-10	67	30,31
11-14	29	13,12
15	93	42,08
Clinical Diagnosis		
AIDS defining conditions		
- Cerebral Toxoplasmosis	64	28,95
- Pulmonary Tuberculosis	35	15,83
- Neuromeningeal cryptococcosis	24	10,86
non -AIDS -defining conditions		
-Bacterial pneumonia	49	22,17
-Renal failure	25	11,31
- Bacterial Gastroenteritis	24	10,86
Length of stay in EMS		
1 Day	5	2,26
1-7 Days	215	97,28
8 Days	1	0,45

Length of Stay:

The average length of stay was 4 ± 2 days, which is significantly shorter than that found in other studies. This discrepancy may be due to the nature of the EMS setting, where patients either experience early death due to critical conditions or are quickly transferred to specialized departments.

Outcomes and Prognosis:

n

The mortality rate in our series was 27% (n=59). The primary causes of death were cerebral toxoplasmosis (40.6%), pulmonary tuberculosis (13.5%), and cryptococcal meningitis (11.8%). Our results are comparable to those of Kone [6] at the Bouake University Hospital, where the overall mortality rate was

23.8%, with leading fatal infections being acute pneumonia (34.7%), cerebral toxoplasmosis (14.2%), and tuberculosis (14.2%).

However, Albus *et al.* [12] in Guinea reported a higher mortality rate of 36%, with tuberculosis being the leading cause of death in 71% of cases (102 patients). Several factors associated with mortality were identified in our study (Table 3). There was a statistically significant association between respiratory distress (p=0.0000), neurological deterioration (p=0.0038), WHO stage (p=0.0036), cerebral toxoplasmosis (p=0.00602), gastroenteritis (p=0.00264), length of stay >1–8 days, and CD4 count <200 (p=0.007706).

Table 3: Predictive Factors for Early Death in HIV Patients with Complications					
Deceased n (%)	Alive n (%)	OR	CI	Р	
41(30,60%)	93(69,90%)	1,866	0,2885-	0,12062	
18(20,69%)	69(79,31%)		1,923		
14 (16,47)	71 (83,53)	0,4003	0,1875-0,8135	0,0077*	
45 (33,09)	91(66,01%)		0,1934 -0,7611	-	
		0,38			
18 (17,31)	86(82,69%)			0,0036*	
41 (35,04)	76(64,96%)			.,	
24	40			0,00602*	
8	27			0,67944	
1	23			0,00264*	
7	17			0,8081	
				0,4824	
5(20)	20 (80)			-) -	
32(59,26%)	22(40,70%)			0,0000*	
22(18,49%)	47(81,51%)			0,0038*	
	Deceased n (%) 41(30,60%) 18(20,69%) 14 (16,47) 45 (33,09) 18 (17,31) 41 (35,04) 24 8 1 7 5(20) 32(59,26%)	Deceased n (%)Alive n (%) $41(30,60\%)$ $93(69,90\%)$ $18(20,69\%)$ $69(79,31\%)$ $14 (16,47)$ $71 (83,53)$ $45 (33,09)$ $91(66,01\%)$ $18 (17,31)$ $86(82,69\%)$ $41 (35,04)$ $76(64,96\%)$ 24 40 8 27 1 23 7 17 $5(20)$ $20 (80)$ $32(59,26\%)$ $22(40,70\%)$	Deceased n (%)Alive n (%)OR $41(30,60\%)$ $18(20,69\%)$ $93(69,90\%)$ $69(79,31\%)$ $1,866$ $14(16,47)$ $45(33,09)$ $71(83,53)$ $91(66,01\%)$ $0,38$ $0,4003$ $0,38$ $18(17,31)$ $41(35,04)$ $86(82,69\%)$ $76(64,96\%)$ $0,38$ 24 8 27 1 1 23 7 17 17 $5(20)$ $20(80)$ $32(59,26\%)$ $22(40,70\%)$	Deceased n (%)Alive n (%)ORCI $41(30,60\%)$ $18(20,69\%)$ $93(69,90\%)$ $69(79,31\%)$ $1,866$ $0,2885$ - $1,923$ $14 (16,47)$ $45 (33,09)$ $71 (83,53)$ $91(66,01\%)$ $0,4003$ $0,38$ $0,1875$ - $0,8135$ $0,1934$ - $0,7611$ $18 (17,31)$ $41 (35,04)$ $86(82,69\%)$ $76(64,96\%)$ $0,38$ 24 8 27 1 1 23 $20 (80)$ 24 8 27 1 $20 (80)$	

Table 3: Predictive Fa	ctors for Early	y Death in HIV	Patients with	Complications

Dist= Distress ; Neu= Neurological ; Ce= cerebral ; Pulm= pulmonary; Toxo= toxoplasmosis ; ARF= Acute Renal Failure

* statistical link between the two groups

	Deceased n (%)	Alive n (%)	OR	CI	Р
ARV Adherence					
Yes	06	63			
No	39	68	0,17	0,05-0,43	0,0001
Cotrimoxazole prophylaxis					
Yes	10	127			
No	35	4	0,09	0,002-0,3	0,0001

 Table 4: Predictive Factors for Early Death Based on ARV and Cotrimoxazole Adherence

Respiratory distress was linked to opportunistic such as pulmonary tuberculosis, diseases pneumocystosis, or toxoplasmosis, often accompanied by coma. In a unit supported by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) at Donka National Hospital in Conakry, Guinea, Abdourahimi et al. [14] reported an average mortality rate of 33.6%, with tuberculosis (43.8%) and toxoplasmosis (11.4%) being the main causes. Factors associated with death included age (25-49 years: HRa 1.60, p=0.002; ≥50 years: HRa 1.80, p<0.001), respiratory symptoms (HRa 1.23, p=0.001), abdominal symptoms (HRa 1.26, p<0.001), and readmission (HRa 0.54, p<0.001) [13].

Ditondo [15] in Kinshasa, DRC, found tuberculosis (28.5%) and cryptococcosis (24.7%) to be the primary opportunistic infections among patients with advanced HIV.

A systematic review [16] based on 12 studies from various African countries (e.g., Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, Gabon, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Burkina Faso) identified tuberculosis, anemia, and toxoplasmosis as the leading causes of hospitalization (40.7%, 34.2%, and 29.3%, respectively). Tuberculosis, anemia, and meningitis were the main causes of death (44.3%, 30.2%, and 28.6%, respectively).

HIV-associated opportunistic infections remain potentially fatal, particularly in individuals with CD4 counts below 200 cells/mm³. Traditional medicine further exacerbates immunosuppression in patients who refuse ARV. Hepatorenal complications from traditional medicine also necessitate dosage adjustments, leading to underdosing or discontinuation of specific treatments. Strengthening therapeutic education, psychosocial support for ARV patients, and addressing stock shortages are essential. Free ARV alone cannot solve the issue of non-adherence.

CONCLUSION

Early death occurs among young adults living with HIV. The high mortality rate underscores the need to establish voluntary testing centers nationwide and support PLHIV through enhanced awareness campaigns in local languages.

Conflicts of Interest: None.

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