

**EDUCATION OF CARETAKERS OF PREGNANT WOMEN: A STRATEGY TO REDUCE VERTICAL TRANSMISSION OF HIV IN RIO DE JANEIRO**

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**Introduction:** The AIDS epidemic in Brazil has changed dramatically. In 1985, the ratio male:female was 28:1 in 1995 it was 3:1, primarily as a function of an increase in heterosexual HIV transmission. Vertical transmission accounts for more than 90% of pediatric AIDS cases. In Brazil, orally administered AZT is freely available to public institutions for AIDS patients. With the results of ACTG 076 and the access of HIV infected pregnant women to AZT, there is a great opportunity to impact the AIDS epidemic in children. However, there has been limited success to date in identifying and diagnosing HIV infection in pregnant women.

**Objective:** The description and implementation of a program involving four public health institutions of the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro, that since August 1995 have offered integrated assistance to HIV infected pregnant women by promoting education to health professionals. Educational objectives include HIV testing, pre- and post-counselling, risk factors for HIV transmission and the potential benefits of the 076 regimen.

**Methods:** In each of the four hospitals an integrated team comprised of an infectologist, obstetrician and pediatrician work together to provide pre- and post-natal care to HIV positive pregnant women who are referred from other services. Educational conferences are underway in public hospital and 4 workshops for 40 physician-nurse teams are planned. Strategies to make available IV AZT are being done.

**Results:** The Program is already established in these four hospitals and the first workshop completed. There was great involvement and interest from the participants and support from the State STD/AIDS Department. Pre- and post-counselling was stressed.

**Conclusion:** Despite the difficulties implementing such a program in a developing country, it has been possible through an integrated team approach to provide medical services, and by the training of health care workers, to optimize strategies to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission.

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