



The Ministry of Health and Wellness, HIV/STI/TB Unit (HSTU) is proud to present the first issue of our quarterly newsletter. The name, “*Get there together*” aptly describes the mandate of the Adolescent Component which is to help adolescents achieve the best possible health outcomes while fulfilling their overall potential. What goals do our adolescents and youth have for themselves and how are we helping them to achieve? It could be viral suppression, improving family relationships, furthering their education or learning a skill. Let us help them, *get there...together!*

This newsletter is another way for us to stay connected during a time when we are forced to be physically apart. There are many challenges but good things are still happening. Let us use this medium to share successes and work through struggles. We can *get there...together!*

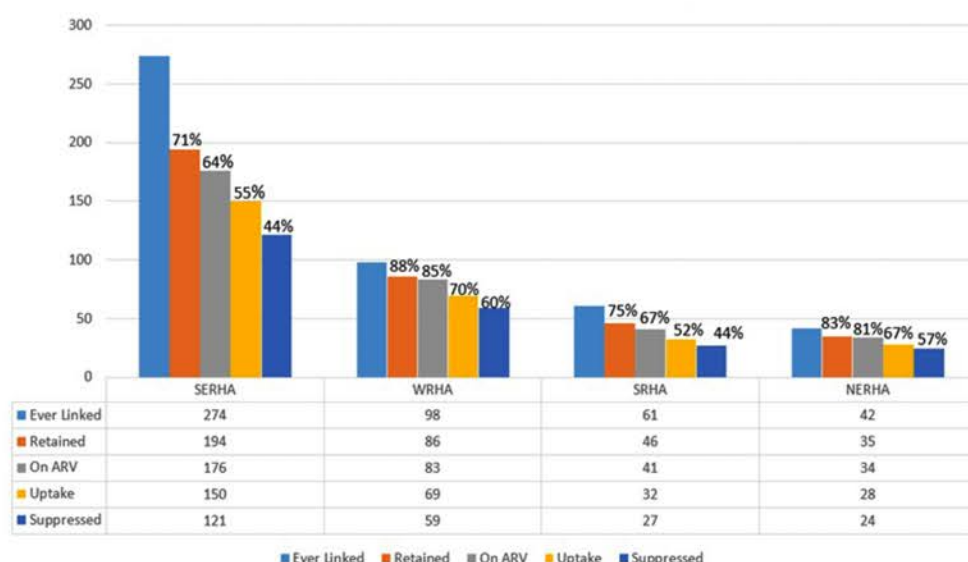
CASE CONFERENCES

ALHIV case conferences were conducted in all regions between July 2020 and February 2021. In total thirteen (13) paediatric/adolescent sites participated in this activity.



Thirty one adolescent cases with unsuppressed viral loads were reviewed by our Clinical Mentor, Dr Alicia Webster and team. Recommendations included simplifying treatment regimes, increasing psychosocial support, and enhanced adherence counselling. To date, approximately half (51%) of these unsuppressed clients have become suppressed post intervention with more expected to achieve suppression once they become eligible for a viral load test.

ALHIV TREATMENT CASCADE (Ages 10 - 19, March 2021)



Achieving and maintaining viral suppression among adolescents remains a challenge. Retention in care appears to be the biggest challenge for SERHA and SRHA and the ripple effects are seen throughout the rest of the cascade. The North East region has made tremendous improvements. The West continues to show good results.



Adolescents go virtual in the West

- Miss Olivia Johnson, Social Worker

The Western Region Health Authority (WRHA) had their quarterly rap session for adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV) in February. The session was held virtually on the zoom platform with over ten participants from the Cornwall Regional Treatment Site. Lively discussions on safe sex, self-care, motivation and adherence were guided by the Social Worker and Adolescent Psychologist. A highlight from the session was a presentation from the JN+ Regional Redress Officer who spoke about discrimination, the rights of adolescents and social empowerment. One participant shared his story about a recent experience with discrimination against a family member which led to a physical altercation. He shared that the knowledge gained from the session provided useful information on how to address similar situations in the future.

The series of virtual rap sessions started in April of last year (2020) after the physical meeting restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to this, sessions were conducted face to face during support group meetings. The virtual rap sessions have increased the attendance of participants as well as their participation in group sessions. The barrier of mobile data access prevented some participants from joining sessions. This was managed by sending highlights of the sessions as well as the contact information for presenters on whatsapp for further dialogue where necessary.

It's a Suppression Party!

Mrs. Nadesha Hunter-Watson,
Contact Investigator

Seven young ladies of the St. Ann's Bay Treatment Site in the North East Regional Health Authority (NERHA) were celebrated for being virally suppressed. Six of the seven adolescents were unsuppressed prior to the most recent viral load result. The team of health care workers had a ribbon ceremony for the group in March to recognize and encourage their progress.

Good job team - let's continue to get there and do it together!



THE SPOTLIGHT

Mrs Sandra Peterkin,
Social Worker from the Southern
Regional Health Authority (SRHA)



In this issue, we are shining the spotlight on Mrs Sandra Peterkin, Social Worker from the Southern Regional Health Authority (SRHA). Mrs Peterkin is described by her peers as energetic, persistent and detail oriented. Clients find her warm personality inviting. They are comfortable relating to her and make special requests to speak to her. While currently stationed in Black River, clients from Mandeville Regional Hospital still enquire about her. The adolescents love her vibe especially when she gets support group sessions off to a buzzy start with aerobics.

Thank you Mrs Peterkin for all you do, we appreciate you!

YOUNG STARS

This quarter we would like to highlight D.W from the WRHA and A.M from the South-East Regional Health Authority (SERHA) for our YOUNG STAR feature.



THE GENERAL HAS NO LIMITS

Coming from a viral load of 30,400 in July 2020 to 153 copies in November 2020, D.W has maintained suppression for the past two viral load results. His consistent participation in support groups, rap sessions and workshops has impacted his holistic development. He now accepts responsibility for maintaining his viral suppression.

D.W is a 21 year old male who enjoys riding his bicycle, spending time with family and cooking. His dream is to become a chef or having a similar career in the food industry. In the meantime he has ventured off into chicken rearing. Initially, D.W was quiet during support group sessions, but now he speaks with confidence and motivates his peers towards adherence and suppression.

D.W, there are no limits for stars - never stop shining!

- Miss Shelly-Ann Williams, Regional PMTCT Nurse

D.W & A.M BIG UP UNUH SELF!



MAN A STAR - ALWAYS SHINING!

A.M is a 20 year old male and very engaging member within his support group. He became virally suppressed after moving from a viral load of 210,527 in December 2019 to 45 in June 2020. Adherence for AM was usually poor but after continued counselling and participation in support groups he made a commitment to his treatment plan which proved successful. He is indeed a YOUNG STAR!

He is very influential among his peers and displays leadership qualities in support group meetings. A.M is a willing, committed adolescent that has made strides in improving his health. He actively participates in social activities at his church and youth group.

A.M, we recognize your progress....and salute you!

At the time of publication, the most recent viral load test result shows that A.M's viral load is again climbing. We decided to still recognise him as a young star because we know the challenges that young people face in maintaining adherence and we would like to encourage him to continue striving for progress.

- Miss Sherika Anderson, Psychologist

Success

- M.M - 20 year old YLHIV in NERHA

The road to HIV success is not **STRAIGHT**, there are often health curves called **CONFUSION**, and loops that can trigger feelings and sad emotions called **DEPRESSION**.

Speed bumps are welcomed and called **FRIENDS**. Red lights are called **STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION** enemies to growth. Caution lights are called **FAMILY**; sometimes they need more time to understand health trends, challenges and possibilities.

But if you have an emergency kit with resources called **DETERMINATION**, an active engine coupled with a workout routine called **PERSEVERANCE**, and an Insurance plan called **FAITH**. Prepare for the **RIDE** of your **LIFE**.

Most importantly, if you allow yourself to be the co-pilot and allow the driver called Jesus to take the wheel, your route towards **SUCCESS** will be filled with more traveling mercies than you could ever imagine!!

Towards a place called Eternal Happiness!

