

LIVING LONGER AND HEALTHIER: INTEGRATING HIV AND HYPERTENSION SERVICES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN INDIA

Background

Introduction of an Antiretroviral therapy (ART) under India's National AIDS Control Program has played a critical role in improving the life expectancy of people living with HIV (PLHIV) and transformed HIV from a severe life-threatening condition to a manageable chronic illness. In 2021, it was estimated that there were around 24 lakhs PLHIV in India, 15.5 lakhs of whom were receiving treatment at 528 ART centres across the country. As PLHIV age, they are at a higher risk of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) like heart attacks and stroke compared to HIV-negative adults, even when their HIV is controlled.







Hypertension is one of the most important risk factors for CVDs. In India, it is estimated that more than 200 million adult population has hypertension, but there is little evidence on burden of hypertension among PLHIV. The National Guidelines for HIV Care and Treatment (2021) recommend integrated care for non-communicable diseases (NCD) including hypertension, however, there is a lack of clarity on its operationalisation.

With support from Resolve to Save Lives, Mumbai Districts AIDS Control Society (MDACS) and I-TECH India implemented a project between November 2021 to August 2022 to assess the operational feasibility of providing integrated screening and management of hypertension among adult PLHIV at 21 ART centres in Mumbai using a 'single window approach'. The project strategies were based on the [WHO HEARTS technical package](#) for management of CVDs, adapted in consultation with State Government officials and experts.



Integrating hypertension management in HIV services can improve health outcomes and should be an important component of a comprehensive package of services for people living with HIV.

Project interventions

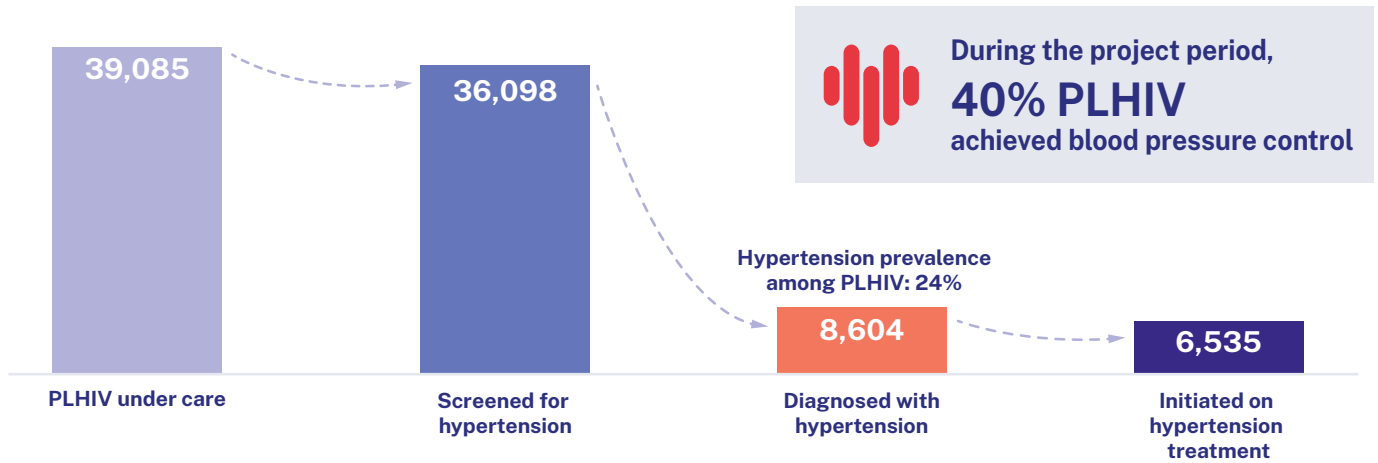
-  Development of a simple, standardized protocol for screening and management of hypertension among PLHIV at the ART centres.
-  Ensuring uninterrupted availability of hypertension protocol medications and validated digital blood pressure monitors at ART centres.
-  Training of ART centre staff (such as medical officers, staff nurses, counsellors) on protocol implementation and counselling on lifestyle modification and nutrition.
-  Screening all adult PLHIV for hypertension, confirmation of diagnosis and treatment per protocol following a differentiated service delivery¹ approach which allows multi-month dispensing of medicines for stable PLHIV with controlled hypertension to harmonize facility visits for HIV and hypertension care.
-  Awareness generation among PLHIV (through educational materials and health talks) on hypertension and importance of treatment compliance and lifestyle modification.
-  Strengthening referrals, recording and reporting, monitoring, supervision and reviews.

¹ Differentiated service delivery (DSD) is a flexible, patient-centered approach that makes accessing and adhering to care less burdensome. DSD has been critical to the widespread use of ART and can be used for any chronic condition, including hypertension.



Project outcomes

PLHIV engaged in HIV and hypertension care at 21 ART centres in Mumbai (Nov 2021 – Aug 2022)



Key highlights

- ✓ No change in routine patient flow at ART centres
- ✓ No additional cost for patients
- ✓ No additional time for patients
- ✓ Viral load suppression maintained

Policy recommendations

- 1 Screen all adult PLHIV for hypertension at least once in six months.
- 2 Treat PLHIV who are newly diagnosed with hypertension or are known cases of hypertension, based on established protocols for both HIV and hypertension.
- 3 Encourage differentiated service delivery for hypertension that aligns with HIV treatment, especially for stable patients.
- 4 Ensure uninterrupted availability of antihypertensive protocol medications at ART centres and Link ART centres.
- 5 Strengthen health information systems to facilitate seamless data integration and monitoring of hypertension and HIV outcomes.
- 6 Institutionalise coordination mechanisms at national and state levels to establish strong collaboration between HIV and NCD programs and ensure sharing of resources and information.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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