

Media release

Ruedi Lüthy Foundation publishes long-term study 'TENART'

Quality of care decisive in battling the HIV/Aids epidemic in resource-limited countries

Bern, 29 November 2017 – The Ruedi Lüthy Foundation published the long-term study 'TENART' in October 2017. Over a 10-year period, Swiss Aids specialist Ruedi Lüthy and his team examined the outcomes of more than 600 HIV/Aids patients receiving treatment at Newlands Clinic in the Zimbabwean capital, Harare. Thanks to the comprehensive care provided to the patients, the results are comparable to those in Switzerland, where the healthcare system is massively better equipped.

There are currently 36 million people living with HIV/Aids worldwide, more than half of them in eastern and southern Africa. While the number of people infected is declining in many western countries, overall the figures are rising. According to projections, by 2030 there may be 54 million people with HIV in need of treatment. This is mainly attributable to new infections (2016: 1.8 million), the lower mortality rate thanks to treatment, and the expected population growth in the countries severely affected.

TENART study: Treatment success thanks to comprehensive care

The battle against the HIV/Aids epidemic hinges on high-quality treatment. The long-term study 'TENART' published in October 2017 shows that the comprehensive care model used at Newlands Clinic in Zimbabwe, where around 6,000 patients from the poorest backgrounds receive treatment free of charge, is just as successful as the HIV treatment provided in Switzerland (cf. "[The HIV care cascade in Switzerland](#)", Kohler et al. 2015). After ten years, 78% of long-term patients at Newlands Clinic remain in care, and the mortality rate is just 4%. Furthermore, 90% of the patients in care for ten years have a fully suppressed viral load. This means they are no longer contagious, and that women cannot pass the HIV virus on to their child during birth or while breastfeeding.

The fight against resistance is decisive

According to the report, the comprehensive care and support of patients is decisive in determining the success of HIV/Aids treatment. The reason for this is that if patients do not take their medication regularly, the virus can mutate after just a short period of time, thus giving rise to resistant viruses. This leads to treatment failure, requiring a switch to drug combinations that are very expensive and in some cases simply unavailable in resource-limited countries.

Ruedi Lüthy, Aids specialist and founder of Newlands Clinic in Harare: "The only way to combat the HIV/Aids epidemic over the long term is through high-quality care resulting in correspondingly high adherence. In addition to medicines, what is needed is the provision of comprehensive information to the patients, coupled with closely coordinated medical and psychosocial care. Where required, we at Newlands Clinic offer supported self-help groups, workshops for young people, and psychological counselling."

As regards the global battle against HIV/Aids, Ruedi Lüthy makes the case in particular for increased efforts to train doctors and nurses in the countries that are seriously affected, with a view to improving the quality of HIV treatment. In addition to prevention, this is the only way to achieve lasting success in fighting the epidemic. The Newlands Clinic Training Centre provides training and ongoing education courses to around 500 local doctors and nurses every year.

TENART Study:

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0186726>

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About the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation

The Ruedi Lüthy Foundation was set up by the Swiss Aids specialist Prof. Ruedi Lüthy in 2003. His daughter Sabine Lüthy has been Chief Executive since January 2012. The purpose of the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation is to provide comprehensive care to HIV and Aids patients in Zimbabwe. The disease is widespread in the country, with around 15% of people in the 15-49 age group being HIV positive, and around 30,000 people die every year as a result of Aids. Based in the capital, Harare, Newlands Clinic provides long-term ambulatory care to some 6,000 patients. The foundation places particular emphasis on the treatment of women, as well as children and adolescents. The regimen is rounded out by services in areas such as women's health, nutrition, vocational training and self-help groups. The foundation is also committed to the ongoing training of local healthcare workers from other clinics, as well as research into HIV in developing countries.

www.ruedi-luethy-foundation.ch