

Ensuring Program Success: Looking into the Best Ways Global Health Initiatives Handle the Struggle Against HIV/AIDS

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Abstract

- There is a general understanding of what constitutes an effective program, but few comprehensive resources exist to provide a thorough analysis on the specificities of existing successful initiatives
- The intent of this project is to look at the main concerns related to global health programming efficacy in regards to the international campaign against HIV/AIDS
- Main aspects include the specifics of:
 - Balancing funds with successful interventions,
 - The importance yet reoccurring neglect of cultural competency when approaching initiatives,
 - How finances and socio-cultural characteristics work together
 - The solutions that provide the best results

Background

- HIV/AIDS has been one of the biggest challenges for the modern health field
 - Approximately 38 million people are currently infected
 - Has driven some of the biggest global health innovations, with many of the discoveries made being applied to campaigns for other diseases
- A big part of determining how successfully a program has been managing its finances is found through comparing implementation and impact
 - Implementation: how a program is designed and executed
 - Impact: how successfully a program is received and helps to make positive changes
- Efficacy and effectiveness will be used interchangeably throughout to indicate general strategy success unless specified, as they are technically different due to the settings in which evaluations considering these terms take place

Financial Matters

- The biggest sources of funding have come from large initiatives such as PEPFAR, the World Bank, the Global Fund, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Cost-effectiveness versus cost-benefit
 - Cost-effectiveness: uses indicators such as disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in comparison to the financial cost to indicate an initiative's success
 - Cost-benefit: is often more geared towards the whims of those funding the program to determine what is the best solution
- Example of cost-effective treatment has been comparing initiatives in Africa
 - Prevention-based strategies such as education initiatives have shown to be significantly more cost-effective than more specific and expensive treatments
 - This does not negate the need for both, as a variety of solutions are necessary
- Poor mismanagement of funds create a variety of problems
 - Render large investments towards solutions ineffective
 - Can actually harm the communities they are supposed to help by creating an unsustainable reliance



Condoms: one of the most effective interventions against HIV/AIDS



Funding and Stakeholders: the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Global Fund, WHO, PEPFAR

Socio-Cultural Concerns

- One of the best ways to look at how well the field of global health is navigating socio-cultural sensitivity is through observing how initiatives conduct research
 - HIV/AIDS-related conditions such as tuberculosis often are underfunded due to the condition being prevalent in lower-income countries
 - Studies will often neglect ethics and respect for communities in the pursuit of a cure or solution, sometimes abandoning the study altogether
 - This often makes it harder in the future to conduct research and receive proper feedback from communities
- It is important to include communities within the development of research and intervention programs, as the best way to create targeted research is to listen and take into consideration what these groups need the most
- Taboo subjects related to HIV/AIDS such as the deterioration of mental health or risky sexual behavior are often glossed over, yet studies have shown that the best interventions are the ones which address these issues and create initiatives which directly target these concerns
- Example of a culturally-conscious program has been a vaginal microbicide trial in Tanzania
 - Created an education and clinical initiative which simultaneously monitored and received feedback from all working levels

Combining Pecuniary and Cultural Aspects

- When creating and executing a global health program, especially one with as much nuance as HIV/AIDS, there is a balance between finding what is most cost-effective in combination with what is most ethical and culturally sensitive
 - Consider regional context and socio-economic inequality
- Example of considering both economics and culture is condom distribution in Africa
 - Although encouraging the use of and providing condoms has proven to be cost-effective, it is necessary to first address taboo topics first
- There's a need for various strategies to work in tandem to create an overall effective program

Solutions

- HIV/AIDS is a collection of ailments and affects all age and sex demographics, which requires solutions that are holistic and go beyond one treatment or tactic
- PEPFAR has utilized a comprehensive approach of utilizing the aid and influence of key societal infrastructures within the affected communities, along with heeding the guidelines of the scientific and medical professionals
 - The organization's approach in aiding Zambia has focused on both detecting cervical cancer and decreasing the rate of HIV/AIDS
 - Has led to nearly halving the number of HIV-positive women and almost doubling those who test negative
- Combination of interlocking campaigns, such as the global fight against HIV/AIDS being closely connected to the one combating tuberculosis
 - Sub-section of tuberculosis deaths are directly contributed to complications with HIV/AIDS
- Much research has pointed to the proposed creation of an international guideline which would help governments and organizations to make informed decisions about how to build initiatives, therefore providing regions receiving aid the protection needed from the many pitfalls which have arisen from other poorly-created interventions

Limitations and Conclusion

- The main limitation to this analysis it is that there are many unique nuances to HIV/AIDS, and not all of them have been included in this paper
 - The mentioned funding organizations are mainly based in the US, but many other economic initiatives exist throughout the globe
 - Literature review has not captured all the regions and cultures affected by HIV/AIDS, as most of the research has centered around initiatives in Africa
- The best global health programs in general are those that are multi-faceted, with HIV/AIDS being no exception
- Programs must acknowledge that there specificities in what is most cost-effective or financially viable while also putting nuances regarding the specificities of different cultures at the center of their initiative's goals
- The strides made in creating new interventions for HIV/AIDS have shown to be applicable to other health conditions around the world

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