Retention in HIV Care Among Adolescents Living With HIV at Naguru Hospital: Effect of COVID-19 Restrictive Measures and Other Associated Factors.

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Introduction; In 2020, there were about 1.75 million adolescents living with HIV around the world. Approximately 1.5 million HIV-infected adolescents were from Sub-Saharan Africa, and by the end of 2019, about 7% of the adolescents in Uganda were living with HIV. Remaining in HIV health care services is necessary for adhering to antiretroviral therapy, viral suppression, assessing drug adverse effects, and diagnosing treatment failure. ALWHIV continue to have a low retention rate in care, with only 65 percent remaining after five years. Yet the implementation of the COVID-19 restriction measures might have worsened it.

Aim; To assess the change in retention in HIV care before and after the implementation of the COVID-19 restriction measures, as well as factors associated with, barriers to, and facilitators of retention in HIV care among ALWHIV at Naguru Hospital after the COVID-19 restrictive measures were implemented.

Methods; A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design will be used. The quantitative study will be a retrospective cohort study with a sample size of 31 for the first objective and 126 for the second objective whose records will be selected consecutively. The qualitative study will be an exploratory study design with a sample size of 25 and participants will be purposefully selected. The quantitative study will be analyzed using interrupted time series and Generalized Estimating Equations with logit link while the qualitative study will be analyzed using codebook thematic analysis.

Utility; This study will help develop new strategies for increasing retention rate of adolescents. It will also give Uganda and other countries insights into how to properly divide and deploy national health resources, as well as prepare for future pandemics and other public health disasters.