


# Meaning of Antiretroviral Therapy for PLWHA

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Article info	Abstract
<p><b>Article history:</b> Received: Oktober 2022 Revised: Accepted:</p> <p><b>Correspondence author:</b> Name: Antonij Edimarta Sitanggang Address: Universitas Sari Mutiara Indonesia, Medan E-mail: antonisitanggang57@yahoo.com</p> <p>International Journal of Nursing and Health Services (IJNHS) Volume 5, Issue 6, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022 DOI: 10.35654/ijnhs.v5i6.661 E-ISSN: 2654-6310</p>	<p><b>Background:</b> Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are global health problems today. The use of antiretrovirals (ARVs) in patients who test positive for HIV is an effort to extend the life expectancy of people living with HIV and AIDS and make them healthier and more productive by reducing viremia and increasing the number of CD4 cells. Objective: This study aims to explore the experience of PLWHA in undergoing ARV therapy in the work area of the Helvetia Health Center Medan. Method: This research is qualitative research with a descriptive phenomenological approach. The population of this study was PLWHA, who received ARV in the working area of Helvetia Health Center Medan. The number of participants is 6 people, and the data saturation has been achieved and taken using a purposive sampling technique. Data collection method with in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed using the N.Vivo software version 12.0 trial. Result: The research results obtained from the interviews showed that there are 3 themes, 7 sub-themes, and 13 categories. The 3 themes are understanding the meaning of ARV treatment, getting support for taking ARVs, and having hopes related to ARVs. Conclusion: In conclusion, participants in this study went through various stages in obtaining ARVs considering that PLWHA already fully understood the meaning of ARVs that could extend the life expectancy of PLWHA.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> PLWHA, Meaning, Therapy, ARV</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are global health problems today. However, the HIV incidence rate decreased from 0.40 per 1000 to 0.26 per 1000 uninfected persons in 2016 [1]. World Health Organization (WHO) states that there are 35 million people in the world living with HIV/AIDS. About 13 million children are orphaned because of AIDS. In contrast, almost 6 hundred babies are infected yearly through mothers with HIV/AIDS, and millions of young adolescents live with stigma without appropriate access to counseling, services, and support [2].

Indonesia is one of the Asian countries with a relatively rapid increase in HIV/AIDS. Data from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia regarding the development of HIV/AIDS in Indonesia until September 2014, cases of HIV/AIDS spread to 381 (76%) of 498 districts/cities throughout the province of Indonesia. The number of new HIV cases every year has reached about 20,000 cases. In 2014 there were 22,689 new cases, with a total of 69.1% of cases of HIV/AIDS in men and women aged 25-49 years [3].

Regarding the incidence of PLWHA in North Sumatra, the North Sumatra Provincial Health Office found the number of HIV cases until December 2018 as many as 1,997 people. While in 2019, the number of HIV cases until March 2019 was 499 people and HIV/AIDS cases continue to increase yearly. Even now, cumulatively, the number has reached 20,000 cases in North Sumatra (Sumut). For this reason, severe treatment is needed, especially in prevention efforts [4].

The problem of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a worldwide health challenge. This problem occurs due to the management of patients who have not

been optimal; control is only concentrated on specific and general therapy by relying on antiretroviral therapy (ARV). At the same time, ARV treatment has not been able to cure the disease, which adds to the challenge regarding side effects. A growing problem related to HIV & AIDS is the high incidence and mortality rate [5].

The use of antiretroviral (ARV) in patients with positive HIV test results is an effort to extend the life expectancy of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). ARV treats infection by slowing down the reproduction process of HIV in the body. The effective use of ARVs in combination, not only for cure but can be used to extend the life expectancy of PLWHA, make them healthier and more productive by reducing viremia and increasing CD4 cell counts [6].

The AIDS response program in Indonesia aims at getting 3 zeroes, namely zero new infections, zero AIDS-related death, and zero stigmas and discrimination. ARV/Strategic Use Of Antiretroviral (SUFA) drug delivery strategy approach to preventing and treating HIV infection. These guidelines update the development of HIV and AIDS treatment and align ARV therapy in adults, adolescents, children, and pregnant women [7]. This research has never been studied in the working area of the Medan HelvetiaHealth Center. Researchers did this because they saw how essential ARVs are for the survival of PLWHA.

Based on the description that has been described previously, researchers are interested in knowing more about the experience of PLWHA in undergoing ARV therapy.

## OBJECTIVE

The formulation of the problem in this study is "How is the experience of PLWHA in undergoing ARV therapy?". This study aimed to explore the experience of PLWHA in undergoing ARV therapy.

## METHODS

This type of research uses qualitative research. This study uses a

phenomenological approach, which is an approach that aims to explain the concept and the basic meaning of a phenomenon experienced by a person [8]. The phenomenon studied in this study is the experience of PLWHA in undergoing ARV therapy. This research will be explored based on the perspective and experience of PLWHA. This research was conducted in the working area of Helvetia Health Center Medan. The population of this study was PLWHA, who received ARV in the working area of Helvetia Health Center Medan. Participants in this study were PLWHA with a purposive sampling technique.

#### **Sample, sample size & sampling technique**

The basic principle of sampling in qualitative research is data saturation until it reaches a saturation point where no new information is obtained and experience is achieved [8]. Tentative participants in this study were 6 participants, and data saturation was performed with the inclusion criteria of participants, namely, participants who have HIV/AIDS, consume ARVs, and can communicate well. Data collection tools in this study were demographic data, interview guides, and field notes.

#### **DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

The primary data collection tool in this study is the researcher himself. In other words, the researcher is a research instrument [9]. The data collection technique in this study used in-depth interviews conducted by the researchers with a duration of 60 minutes. The method used is in-depth interviews (in-depth interviews). After carrying out the data collection process, the researchers conducted data analysis. In analyzing the research data, the researcher used the approach of Colaizzi [9].

#### **DATA ANALYSIS**

In carrying out the analysis of the data obtained later from the interviews, the researchers used the help of the N Vivo software version 12.0 (trial). The data analysis process in this study was carried out by content analysis immediately after each interview process was completed, which was at the same time as the data transcript was made.

#### **Ethical consideration**

Before collecting data, the researcher first conducted an ethical test at the research ethics committee of the University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra and was declared to have passed the ethical test with letter number 841/KEPK/FKUMSU/2022.

#### **RESULTS**

Characteristics of the participants in this study, namely the age of the participants, were in the age range of 20-30 years, the sex of the majority was male, and the education level of all participants was high school. The results of the study found three main themes that explain the meaning of ARV therapy for PLWHA, which can be seen from the following research results:

1. **Understanding the Meaning of ARV Treatment**

ARV treatment can reduce the amount of the HIV/AIDS virus in the body. The side effects that are felt vary both physically and psychosocially, as expressed by each participant below:

*"Initially drinking it didn't taste good, then over time I got bored, but I had to drink it for the rest of my life. At the beginning of drinking, I felt weaker, had a headache, got dizzy, I just went to bed, but it was said that there would be side effects like that the first time I drank it ..."* (participant1)

*"The first time, it felt like something was sticking to the tongue, feeling bored while*

*thinking about whether it was like this every day, but what can you do? You have to drink for life, and the initial sensation of drinking itchy continues to feel often dizzy and have headaches, it's the same if your bowel movements are thick, but that's it. He said it was a side effect, yes (participant 2)*

*"At first, I felt dizzy and had a headache every morning, but I took the paracetamol, which disappeared for 2-3 hours. That's how I felt for 3 weeks, but because they said the side effects were like that, I still took the ARV medication, even though I was a little bored." (participant 3)*

*"I remember that at that time I felt nausea for about 2 weeks in the morning, and dizziness, but after I took my rest for about 2-3 hours, it disappeared, yes because the explanation from the puskesmas was a side effect, I just accepted it though feel bored" (participant 4)*

*"That day, I felt stressed, yes, and felt burdened because I remember that time of the day I felt dizzy and had a headache and nausea, but because I knew very well from the officer who said this was a side effect that I would experience, I couldn't help but keep going. Taking their ARV drugs, even if they are saturated" (participant 5)*

*"The first time I felt like something was off my tongue, there was an itching feeling, then I felt nauseous and dizzy and had a headache, until I felt bored, because 2-3 weeks I felt that way, but I remember very well from this officer I would experience it. , so I still take the ARV" (participant 6)*

## 2. Get support Taking ARV

ARV drinking support is the support that participants get because it will impact or affect adherence to ARVs. Support is a hidden prayer and can provide its spirit for PLWHA. All informants received support from family, companions of PLWHA, and health workers, as expressed by each participant, which is listed below:

*"...Thankfully, the family and the staff here helped give me the confidence to take ARV so I can survive, so I feel supported by other people, plus when I meet friends at the puskesmas, I encourage each other and share..." (participant 1)*

*"...Alhamdulillah, the officers here helped give confidence to my family. Finally, my family supported me, and I became stronger to undergo this treatment, especially when taking my friend's medicine. Maybe some of them are older than me, but they also encourage each other so calmer..." (participant 2)*

*"I am pleased and grateful because the PLWHA assistant and my friends and family fully support them by encouraging them to continue taking ARVs. Moreover, they all always remind them not to break up and keep taking their ARVs to the health center if there are only 2 ARVs left, for example" (participant 3)*

*"I always thank you for what? My family has always taken my ARV drugs until now, and they always remind me not to turn off the alarm, as stated by health workers and PLWHA assistants, so that they don't forget to take ARVs, one of which is to use an alarm" (participant 4)*

*"Thankfully, my family, friends, health workers, and PLWHA assistants are all very supportive by reminding me to continue taking ARVs, don't give up, don't forget to take the next medication to the puskesmas. I'm very touched and happy...I feel very cared for because my friend is also always encouraging" (participant 5)*

*"If I say my friends and family are the best, it's because it's even a small thing if I travel back home, it will be too late, and I even stay overnight. For example, they always remind me to put my ARV medicine in my wallet or in a place that other people don't know. , and when it was*

*time to take ARV drugs, they contacted me" (participant 6)*

*certainly get medicine. Free ARV always comes from the puskesmas" (participant 6)*

### 3. Have Hopes related to ARV

Expectations desired from PLWHA start from themselves and the government regarding ARVs. This is expressed by each participant as follows:

*"...I'm a woman, so I want to be completely healed who finally wants to get married and later have children, ma'am. Just like other women, some drugs make healing like other diseases just as healthy. I hope it will be achieved, my prayer ..."* (participant1 )

*".....my hope is to be fully recovered and continue to want to marry my idol, ma'am. My name is a woman, ma'am. I want to get married and have children and be happy with my little family.. thank you, ma'am..."* (participant 2)

*"I hope that the government continues to make free ARV drugs always because these drugs have to be taken every day. If we have to pay for it, it must be difficult for us as PLWHA to get ARVs again, ma'am, plus I want to get married and have a family, and that's for sure fully recovered"* (participant 3)

*"If you are asked about your hopes, ma'am, you want to get well, because you want to marry me, ma'am...then free ARV drugs are still given by the government, ma'am"* (participant 4)

*"We hope that PLWHA, ma'am, wants to get well and then the ARV drugs are not difficult to get, or always free ARV drugs from the puskesmas, because you can't imagine paying for it"* (participant 5)

*"Oh, ma'am, if you ask for hope, surely everyone who is sick will recover. Even though I know this is impossible for us PLWHA, I always pray that there will be a miracle for my recovery, and in the end, I can get married, build a family, and*

## DISCUSSION

Understanding ARV is one of the essential things that PLWHA should have. The results of this study indicate that all participants understand all stages of treatment. This understanding includes the types of drugs, drug side effects, and return visits to the health center. Informants in this study received first-line ARVs neviral (Nevirapine) and Duviral (Zidovudine and Lamivudine). All informants who took first-line ARV with the drug Neviral Duviral had experienced side effects of dizziness, nausea, and vomiting. This study follows research conducted [10] that side effects often occur in itching, nausea, and vomiting. Side effects are not only experienced physically but also from a psychosocial point of view, namely stress, boredom, feeling burdened, and tortured as experienced by participants as expressed by each participant. This study's results align with research that says that the side effects of ARVs cause psychological and physical pain. This condition creates new stress due to the condition of the body that experiences side effects from taking ARVs [11].

Support is a form of motivation and becomes its strength for PLWHA. According to the expert (2011) stated that with support from social, it will create a conducive environment to provide motivation and meaningful insight for PLWHA. In this study, participants were supported by their families, companions, health workers, and another fellow PLWHA to continue their treatment, namely taking ARVs, because ARVs were taken for the rest of their lives. [12] Families are the primary source of strength and support for PLWHA undergoing treatment.

All informants in this study received family support, such as parents, siblings, and fellow PLWHA, who were

considered family. This follows research [13] which states that PLWHA who have adequate family support have a good quality of life, in contrast to PLWHA who have less family support. Health workers in the VCT room are the spearhead of PLWHA services. With positive support from health workers, it is hoped that PLWHA will have a good quality of life to continue treatment. Health workers also stated that PLWHA must also obtain family support, and the officers helped convey to the family the condition of PLWHA so that the family also provided mental support [14].

The family is the most critical source of support for women living with HIV/AIDS undergoing treatment. This is in accordance with research conducted by [15] which revealed that the support provided by the family could make PLWHA adhere to ARV treatment [16]. Another study conducted in 2012 stated that positive family support for women with HIV/AIDS would affect individual coping and ability to deal with problems.

All participants in this study still have hope for themselves and the government. Hope for yourself from the hope of wanting to get married. There is a medicine that heals and recovers from this disease. This is also supported by clinic staff and assistants that PLWHA have high hopes to recover and live like other people not affected by HIV/AIDS [17]. This is also supported by the research of Sukarja, Endang, and Nursisati, which revealed that the experience of PLWHA still has hope for recovery when going through a critical condition. Hope for the surrounding environment is the hope to get married and have children. The results of this study are supported by research [18] on the meaning of life in women PLWHA who have hopes and goals for them, namely fighting to live longer to be able to look after and care for children and still hope to get cured from the disease they are experiencing.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results that have been obtained, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The experience of PLWHA in undergoing ARV therapy varies. This can be seen from the study's results that found three main themes: theme 1, Understanding the Meaning of ARV Treatment; theme 2, Getting Support for Taking ARVs and theme 3, Getting hope, related to ARVs.
2. Theme 1, Understanding the Meaning of ARV Treatment, consists of 2 sub-themes, namely physical and psychosocial, with seven categories: weakness, headache, dizziness, itching, nausea, boredom, and boredom.
3. Theme 2 Getting Support for Taking ARV consists of 3 sub-themes, namely family, friends, and health workers, with three categories: reminding, encouraging, and giving confidence.
4. Theme 3 Getting Hope related to ARV consists of 2 sub-themes, namely self and the government, with three categories: complete recovery, wanting to get married, and always free ARV drugs.
5. Participants in this study carried out various stages in obtaining ARVs considering that PLWHA already fully understood the meaning of ARVs that could extend the life expectancy of PLWHA.

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