Antenatal HIV Screening and Treatment in South Africa: Social Norms and Policy Options

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Abstract

South Africa has one of the highest prevalence of HIV and AIDS in the world, with mother-to-child transmission being an important route for spread of the infection. For years, AIDS scientists and activists locally and internationally have been working desperately for the people of South Africa to have access to treatment for HIV and AIDS. Policymakers in South Africa have consistently maintained that HIV infection is not responsible for AIDS, thus creating the biggest obstacle to implementation of appropriate prevention and therapeutic programmes, including antiretroviral therapy for HIV positive persons. Only recently, people within the government and ruling party, defying previous policy, have agreed that antiretroviral drugs should be given to pregnant women with HIV. The social fabric of South African society is markedly different from that of Western countries. In this paper, the author analyses the likely implications of antenatal testing and treatment of pregnant women in South Africa, in light of the socio-economic and cultural status of women in that society. (Afr J Reprod Health 2004; 8[2]: 77-85)

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References


