

Effective Intervention for Depression in People Living with HIV and AIDS in rural South Africa through community Home-Based Care Workers: Assessing the Impact of “Speaking Books”

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BACKGROUND

South Africa is experiencing one of the most severe AIDS epidemics in the world. By the end of 2005, there were approximately five and a half million people living with HIV in South Africa and almost 1 000 AIDS deaths occurring daily (UNAIDS/WHO, 2006). With the lack of adequate medical facilities to accommodate the vast numbers of people infected, home based care workers (HBCWs) are helping to reduce the stress on hospitals and are improving the care of people living with AIDS through home-based hospice care. South Africa Depression & Anxiety Group (SADAG), in association with Books of Hope, has created an edutainment tool to present health care issues to low level literacy, rural communities, by producing hard-backed books featuring a sound track read by well-known local personalities in relevant and appropriate languages on critical issues including AIDS and Mental Health. Each “speaking book” in the Books of Hope series consists of 16 pages of country appropriate illustrations supported by simple, clear text. For each page there is a corresponding push button that triggers a sound track of the text. The information is therefore seen, read and heard by the book’s recipient. The goal of the present study is to assess the value, impact and educational gains of the speaking books for various caregivers.

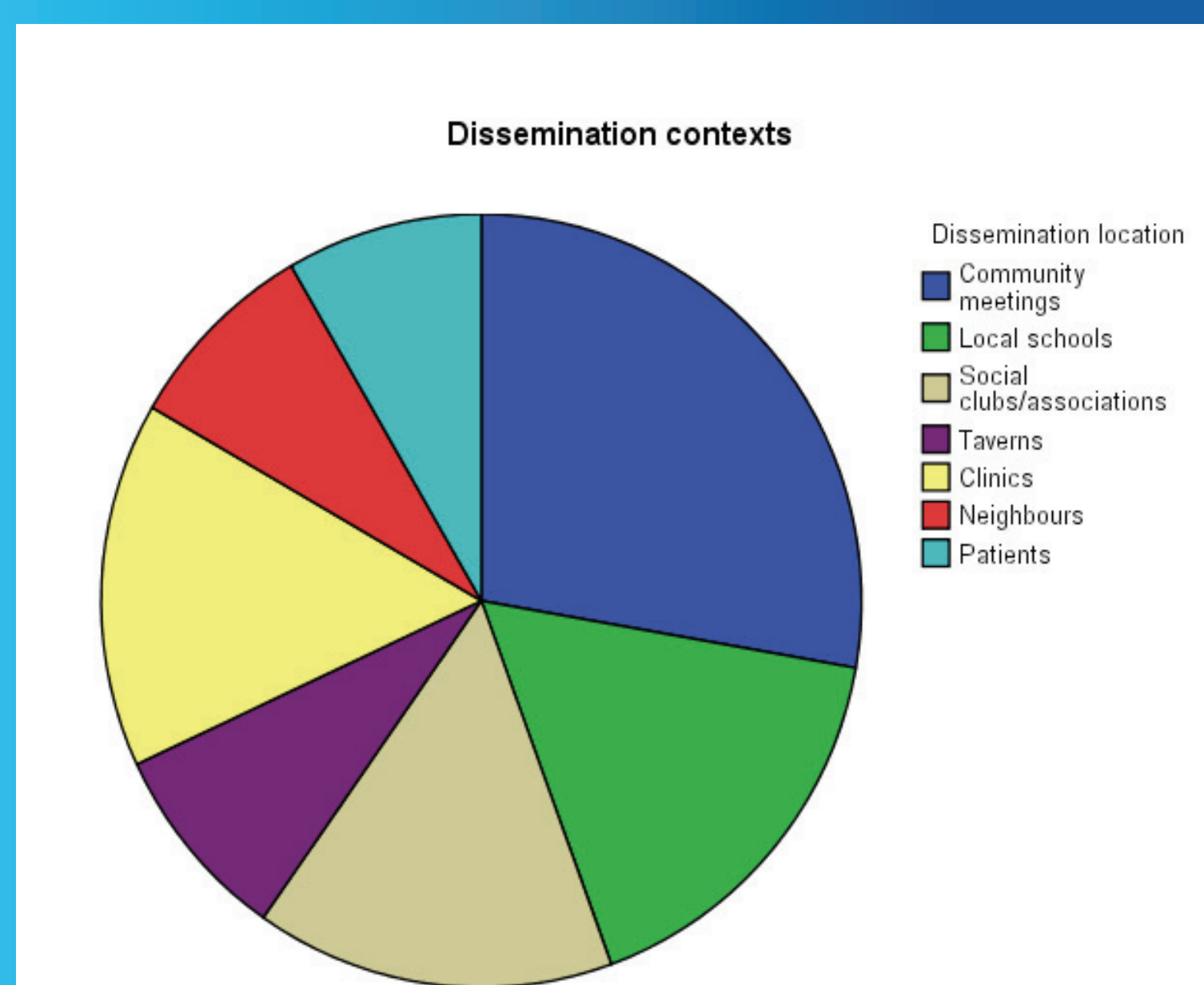
METHODS

HBCWs who attended a workshop conducted by the South African Depression & Anxiety Group were asked to participate in the study. The workshop consisted of various talks on mental health topics as diverse as depression, suicide and trauma as well as support group formation. This workshop was an exercise in cognitive priming and conceptual empowerment. On completion of the workshop all HBCWs were given a Speaking Book and a questionnaire designed specifically for this study aimed at eliciting the impact of the speaking book. SADAG facilitators requested that respondents make use of the book and reflect on the efficacy of the text for a fortnight. Envelopes with free return postage were given to the HBCWs to return the completed questionnaires.

FINDINGS

A total of 213 care workers (n=213) returned the completed questionnaires to SADAG after 14 days. 97.6% of respondents reported that the book was easy to understand and 94.8 % reported that the book contains useful information. 93.8% of the sample reported that the books made it easier to talk to patients about an abstract concept such as depression. Finally, the HBCWs were encouraged to share their book with other members of their community. Over 11 000 members of the community were exposed to the speaking books by the home based care workers, therefore dissemination as an average was found to be 59 people per book.

Potential for Dissemination



HBCW in Lydenburg



The Way Forward

The “Speaking Books” have been shown to be a novel way to increase the mental health literacy of HBCWs as well as an effective tool in opening a dialogue in the community on a stigmatized topic. Further investigation using a controlled design is required before additional conclusions can be drawn.