

Making mental health matter in rural South African AIDS Care

Exploratory reflections on pioneering a "Speaking Book"

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Overview of main issues in South Africa and the need for "Speaking Books"

South Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV and AIDS infection. This, coupled with limited medical facilities, means many people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) are cared for by HBCW. The South African Depression & Anxiety Group (SADAG), an NGO, have created "Speaking Books" as a unique health care education tool aimed at psycho-social education on depression for rural, low literacy PLWHA and care-workers.

An assessment of one of these books, "Living with AIDS doesn't mean Living with Depression" was conducted in 2005.

Methods/Data Collection

- Home Based Caregivers from five rural South African AIDS care sites including Modimolle, KwaMashu, Louis Trichart, Newcastle and Thoyandou, attended Mental Health Care Education work shops conducted by SADAG.
- "Speaking Books" were distributed to 193 Home Based Caregivers.
- Caregivers were requested to complete open-ended questionnaires on the efficacy of these books after having shown the books to their patients.
- The questionnaires were returned to SADAG via the South African Postal Service.



Results

- Dissemination of "Speaking Books" totaled 7530 PLWA.
- 98.4% of caregivers reported the books as easily comprehensible, with 93.3% reporting that they learnt new facts about Depression and AIDS through the Book.
- 70% of the PLWA reported that the Books were a good source of information.
- 60% of PLWHA were engaged and enjoyed the "speaking" function.
- 82.2% of caregivers reported good sound quality.
- 95.8 % requested translation, even though the texts were well received in English.
- Chi-square test results ($0.00 < 0.05$) indicated there was a significant relationship between region and desired indigenous language for text publication.

Recommendations

- The popularity and efficacy of this "Speaking Book" has lead to multitudinous requests for personal copies. SADAG has addressed this by obtaining state and private funding to produce more titles.
- Technical improvements were requested and have been addressed by enhancing battery life and the introduction of a start/stop mechanism.
- "Speaking Books" are now being published in a variety of local languages using well known celebrities.

