

# Improving Health Literacy in Uganda



\* The person in this photograph is not a real patient.

## The Challenge

—In Uganda, as with other resource-limited settings, there is a critical shortage of physicians and nurses.

—As of 2013, the doctor to patient ratio was estimated at 1 for every 24,725 people, with a nurse to patient ratio of 1 to every 11,000 people. <sup>1</sup>

—In a country of over 38 million people that represents a major challenge, as rural populations are forced to travel long distances to access health care and even those living in major cities have to endure long waiting periods for care. <sup>2</sup>

—There are an estimated 1.5 million people living with HIV and an estimated 79,000 people living with TB in Uganda. <sup>3</sup>

The transmission of HIV from an HIV-positive mother to her child during pregnancy, labour, delivery or breastfeeding is called mother-to-child transmission. In the absence of any interventions, transmission rates range from 15-45%. This rate can be reduced to levels below 5% with effective interventions. <sup>4</sup>

## The Goal

Use effective interventions to drive human behavior change and improve health literacy to optimize disease prevention and treatment outcome for people living with HIV.

## Our Solution

In 2015, Connect for Life™ implemented its first flagship program in Uganda in partnership with the Ugandan Ministry of Health and the Infectious Diseases Institute, focusing on HIV, TB, and maternal and child health.

The program was launched in two clinics and is now available to all patients in the Infectious Diseases Institute as part of clinical practice.

Building on Connect for Life™ technology, the Uganda program provides health care professionals with a web-based interface using mobile technology to promote healthy behaviors and adherence to treatment, by providing patients with customizable voice call and text messages specific to their needs.

> See message examples on next page

# Message Examples

## Treatment Adherence Reminders

Pill reminders are sent out as an outbound message (voice message) or as a text message on the different times the patient needs to take their medication

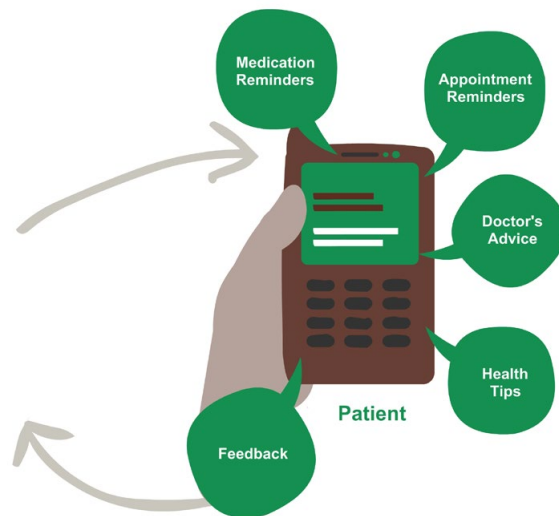
## Visit reminders

## Health Tips

Focus on importance of treatment adherence, dealing with stigma and discrimination, nutrition, healthy pregnancy, breast feeding, general health and well-being, sexual health and cancer.

## Examples

- HIV positive people are 5-10 times more likely to get TB as HIV weakens the immune system. Go to a clinic for a TB test if you've been losing weight, had chills, fever, night sweats or coughing for more than 2 weeks or if you have aches in the joints, kidneys, stomach or spine because TB can develop outside the lungs.
- Depression, stress, and anxiety can be difficult to overcome and are very common for people living with HIV. Exercise is one of the best things you can do to help yourself feel better mentally -- it's not just about physical fitness. Exercise is beneficial because we produce hormones that help calm us down when we exercise. Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Everyone can catch HIV/AIDS during unprotected sex with an infected person. AIDS does not discriminate-- every one of us is at risk. ALWAYS use condoms to protect yourself.



# The Impact

**The program is well on its way of generating key findings which will be validated using real world data to design and develop sustainable implementation models that can be scaled to other regions and public health areas.**

"Being HIV positive in Uganda has some challenges. Patients may get to the centers where the treatment is, but they face the challenge of not getting proper information or proper management."  
—Ms. Harriet Nalunga, Volunteer, Infectious Disease Institute

"In Uganda health literacy is still very low, especially in people not being able to access information."  
—Regina Namata Kamoga, Exec Director, Community Health and Information Network (CHAIN)

"It is the dream of any healthcare worker to get additional support to make an impact, not only to the patients, but also to healthcare workers and policy makers."  
—Prof. Elly Katabira, Prof of Medicine, College of Health Sciences, Makerere University.

## References

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3. [https://extranet.who.int/sree/Reports?op=Replet&name=/WHO\\_HQ\\_Reports/G2/PROD/EXT/TBCountryProfile&ISO2=UG&outtype=PDF](https://extranet.who.int/sree/Reports?op=Replet&name=/WHO_HQ_Reports/G2/PROD/EXT/TBCountryProfile&ISO2=UG&outtype=PDF)
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