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An assessment of food supplementation to chronically sick patients receiving home based care in Bangwe, Malawi : a descriptive study

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Abstract

Background

The effect of food supplementation provided by the World Food Programme to patients and their families enrolled in a predominantly HIV/AIDS home based care programme in Bangwe Malawi is assessed.

Methods

The survival and nutritional status of patients and the nutritional status of their families recruited up to six months before a food supplementation programme started are compared to subsequent patients and their families over a further 12 months.

Results

360 patients, of whom 199 died, were studied. Food supplementation did not improve survival but had an effect (not statistically significant) on nutritional status. Additional oil was given to some families; it may have improved survival but not nutritional status.

Conclusion

Food supplementation to HIV/AIDS home based care patients and their families does not work well. This may be because the intervention is too late to affect the course of disease or insufficiently targeted perhaps due to problems of distribution in an urban setting. The World Food Programme's emphasis on supplementary feeding for these families needs to be reviewed.

