

HIV Antiretroviral Therapy loss to follow-up incidence in

Eswatini

by

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Abstract

Background: Adherence to Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) antiretroviral treatment (ART) remains important to ensuring the efficiency of treatment. Studies have shown that poor adherence leads to less effective viral load suppression which has the potential to cause treatment resistance. The purpose of the study is to estimate the incidence rate and predictors of loss to follow-up amongst adult ART patients in Eswatini.

Methods: This study is a retrospective analysis of all patients who started antiretroviral therapy treatment between January 2018 and December 2022. Data was sourced from the Ministry of Health database which was inclusive of all ART patients from the 205 government health facilities that were providing ART at the time. Survival analysis using Kaplan Meier plots, log-rank tests and multivariable Cox Proportional Hazard regression analysis was conducted to determine factors associated with loss to follow-up amongst ART patients.

Results: a total of 44777 participants were included in the analysis with a total follow-up time of 102159 person-years. A total of 11969 (25.1%) patients became lost to follow-up at least once during the study period. Age, region, risk year and regimen change were found to be significantly associated with ART LTFU.

Conclusion: HIV services should target enhanced retention programs at newly initiated 15-24 year olds and those that never changed ART regimen.