SOLTHIS: sharing medical expertise to promote national skills

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Issue: How to help local stakeholders organize sustainable care to people infected by HIV/AIDS: medical support to national access to ARV programs in Africa.

Description: Founded in July 2003 by Pr. Christine Katlama and Pr. Gilles Brücker Solidarité Thérapeutique et Initiatives contre le Sida (SOLTHIS) is an independent NGO committed to enabling access to antiretroviral drugs for people suffering from HIV/AIDS.

SOLTHIS provides daily technical support to local care structures, by bringing them:

- medical training in hospital and community care centers,
- technical support in HIV-related medicine and science
- assistance and counseling in:
  - care and laboratory (virology, immunology, bacteriology);
  - PMTCT prevention and organisation;
  - data collection and epidemiological evaluation;
  - pharmacy management;
  - AIDS policies.

A scientific committee meets every month to analyse data from the field and issue technical recommendations.

Since its creation, SOLTHIS has launched 4 programs in:

Mali (Segou), December 2003:
- 9 prescribing physicians
- 32 prescribing clinics in the Segou district
- PMTCT program planned for T4 2006.

Mali (Niamey), October 2004:
- 12 prescribing physicians
- 9 prescribing clinics in the Niamey district
- PMTCT program planned for T4 2006.

Benin (Atacora-Donga), January 2005:
- 12 prescribing physicians
- 9 prescribing clinics in the Donga district
- PMTCT program planned for T4 2006.

Madagascar (Antananarivo – Diego Suarez), May 2006:
- 12 prescribing physicians
- 9 prescribing clinics in the Diego-Suarez district
- PMTCT program planned for T4 2006.

More than 2200 patients benefited from ARV treatment (within the framework of national initiatives).

Since January 2006 and 4 centres currently being activated.

Mali
- Locations: Segou
- 6 centres in the Segou district
- 6 centres in the Bia and Niono district
- 4 centres planned for the San district

Benin
- Locations: Nima, Zinder
- 12 prescribing sites
- 12 prescribing clinics
- 9 more than 1200 ARV treatments initiated at this time

Niger
- Locations: Niamey, Zinder
- 12 prescribing sites
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Since its creation, more than 800 health workers have received technical assistance and counseling in:

- care and laboratory (virology, immunology, bacteriology);
- PMTCT prevention and organisation;
- data collection and epidemiological evaluation;
- pharmacy management;
- AIDS policies.

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Training

More than 800 health workers have received training
- Grassroot training
- HAART Prescription
- Pharmacy
- Opportunistic infections and Tuberculosis
- Dermatology and HIV
- Opportunistic infections and Tuberculosis
- Biology: immunology, virology, parasitological,
- Adherence

Lessons learned: SOLTHIS’ approach has set up the conditions for a better care to HIV/AIDS patients and has enhanced capacity building:

- Application of WHO recommendations and use of simplified ARV treatment regimens (FCD).
- 80% of all patients are receiving a first-line treatment.
- More than 800 medical workers were trained to ARV prescription and adherence.
- Assessment and follow-up tools will be implemented for evaluation purposes.

Recommendations: Cause it’s time to deliver,

- Being on the field close to those who need assistance enables to bridge the gap between funders and local stakeholders.