Caretakers of AIDS Patients in Rural Tanzania

Author(s)
R S Katapa

Abstract
Socio-economic characteristics of caretakers of bed-ridden AIDS patients in two rural communities of Rungwe district, Tanzania were sought. The study also explored what caretaking entailed. Data were collected from 60 caretakers between September and November 2002. The proportion of female caretakers was significantly higher than that of male caretakers; the majority of the caretakers were old. The majority of the AIDS patients were family members of the caretakers. The caretakers' households lacked basic needs for the patients. Some of the caretakers sold family assets in order to buy medicines for the patients. Most of the caretakers worked under stress and there was no one to counsel them. Community members offered very little or no support to caretakers and the households were stigmatized. People in the communities knew about HIV/AIDS transmission, but their behaviour did not match their knowledge.

Keywords
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