

Enhancing Community Based Medical Education: the Medical Education Partnership Initiative in Nigeria (MEPIN); turning the tide: AIDS in Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populous nation in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), with 180 million inhabitants globally it represents one of the top five HIV/AIDS epidemics. The government of Nigeria initiated its National Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Program in 2002 and later gained support from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and other international donors. The scale-up of HIV care and ART has been a major success, with over 600,000 patients receiving ART. Despite these gains, 1.5 million are estimated in need of ART, daunting for the country's healthcare infrastructure and limited resources. Critical to addressing this public health challenges are the existing health systems in terms in the health challenge are the existing health systems in terms of both physical infrastructure and capacity in the health workforce. As a result, Nigeria exemplifies the critical need for sufficient, well trained and a properly distributed health care workforce.

The MEPIN consortium represents some of the foremost medical teaching institutions in the country. On an annual basis 1,100 physicians and 14,000 postgraduates are awarded degrees from six MEPIN supported universities in Nigeria. The graduates are well distributed throughout the country and have had a long history of community-based medical education. The MEPI grant has provided support in improvement of these programs through revision of educational programs to competency-based education, and renovation and improvement of community-based posting clinics. Integration with the PEPFAR-supported care and treatment programs has been facilitated through the MEPIN programs. Student and community surveys have been conducted a lessons learned have provided the basis for program improvement. The MEPIN provides important models for innovation in community-based education, critical to addressing the global disparities in healthcare.