Ethical and Practical Constraints to the Participation of HIV-infected Orphaned Children in a Clinical Trial in Zimbabwe

Experience from the Anti-Retroviral Research for Orphans Trial (ARROW) Study


1University of Zimbabwe-College of Health Sciences, Harare, Zimbabwe; 2Joint Clinical Research Centre, Kampala, Uganda; 3Baylor-Uganda, Paediatric Infectious Disease Centre, Mulago Hospital, Kampala, Uganda; 4MRC/Uganda Virus Research Institute, Entebbe, Uganda; 5Medical Research Council, Clinical Trials Unit, London, United Kingdom

BACKGROUND

Clinical trials in children are governed by the Nuremberg Code, which requires informed consent for participation in clinical research, and by the Declaration of Helsinki, which requires proxy consent on behalf of minors from their legally authorized representative.

Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) have responsibility for ensuring that the rights and welfare of subjects are fully protected.

ARROW is a randomised clinical trial evaluating strategies for the management of Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) in 1200 HIV-infected children from sites in Uganda (n=800) and Zimbabwe (n=400) (see poster MOPE0191).

ETHICAL CONSTRAINTS

PROBLEMS

- Approximately 40% of HIV-infected children in Zimbabwe are orphaned.
- Relatives offer, or are asked, to act as informal guardians.
- It is not the cultural norm to legalise this guardianship process, which is lengthy and costly.
- The Zimbabwean IRB stipulates that consent is obtained from the child's legal representative.

SOLUTIONS

- Representation was made to the IRB, which waived the 'legal' requirement.
- Guardians were asked to sign an affidavit stating that they understood the high level of care-giver commitment required by ARROW.
- Orphaned children are now recruited to ARROW.

ISSUES

- Orphaned children may live with different relatives at various times, and changes in care-giver can lead to a reduction in drug adherence.
- Changes in care-giver may also impact upon clinic attendance and confidentiality.

PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS

PROBLEMS

- The success of ART depends largely on adherence to medication.
- Orphaned children may live with different relatives at various times, and changes in care-giver can lead to a reduction in drug adherence.

SOLUTIONS

- Pill boxes will now be supplied for all children in ARROW to help care-givers administer study medication at the correct time.
- Home visitors and counsellors on the ARROW team are available to advise and discuss with children and care-givers issues arising.
- The ARROW team has established a support group for orphans and other HIV-infected children, so that practical and psychosocial problems can be addressed, and experiences shared.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

- Researchers should familiarise themselves with local IRB requirements for consent involving orphans.
- IRBs need to be aware of the implications of orphan status on consent for clinical trials.
- Groups providing community advice are a vital way to supporting the children and care-givers participating in clinical trials.

COLLABORATORS and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank all the patients and staff from all the centres participating in the ARROW trial.

TRIAL TEAM


TRIAL TEAMS

University of Zimbabwe-College of Health Sciences, Harare, Zimbabwe: KJ Nathoo, MF Bwakura--Dangarembizi, P Nahirya--Ntege, P Musoke, V Musiime

Joint Clinical Research Centre, Kampala, Uganda: P Mugyenyi 2, P Musoke 2, P Munderi 3, M Thompson 5, A Kekitiinwa 2, K Nathoo 1


We thank all the patients and staff from all the centres participating in the ARROW trial.

1Department of Paediatrics, Medical School, University of Zimbabwe, Box A178, Medical School, Harare, Zimbabwe

2Joint Clinical Research Centre, Kampala, Uganda

3Baylor-Uganda, Paediatric Infectious Disease Centre, Mulago Hospital, Kampala, Uganda

4MRC/Uganda Virus Research Institute, Entebbe, Uganda

5Medical Research Council, Clinical Trials Unit, London, United Kingdom

ARROW is funded by the UK Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust.

For International Development (DfID). Drugs are provided by GlaxoSmithKline.