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The Effect of Formal Written
Communication on Male Partner Participation
in the Prevention of Mother to Child HIV
Transmission (PMTCT) Programme in Zvimba
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BACKGROUND: Data from the Zimbabwe 2001 National Sentinel Surveillance Survey of Antenatal mothers showed HIV seroprevalence of 30%. Men are recognized as key stakeholders in reproductive health issues. In Zvimba District in 2009, only 6.25% of pregnant women had HIV testing together with their partners. Pregnant women are advised to invite their partners for HIV testing through verbal communication.

METHODS: A randomized control trial (RCT) was conducted at three hospitals in Zvimba District to determine if formal written communication will improve male participation in PMTCT. Male partners of pregnant women attending ANC were followed up after having been randomly assigned to either receiving formal written invitation or routine verbal invitation to participate in PMTCT. Males invited by any of the two methods were followed up and interviewed regardless of whether they had participated in PMTCT or not. The follow up period was up to the second ANC visit.

RESULTS: Of the 402 males invited, 303 (73.5%) participated in the study. Of the 303, 183 (60.4%) had been invited by letter. Males were more likely to participate in PMTCT if they resided in urban areas [RR =1.44 95% CI (1.12-1.85)], being knowledgeable about PMTCT [RR=2.64, 95% CI (1.34-5.23)], knowing benefits [RR=2.33, 95% CI = (1.05-5.16)]. Males formally employed [RR=1.67, 95% CI = (1.18-2.37)] and those living within 10 kilometers from a health facility [RR =1.42, 95% CI =1.08-1.85] were likely to participate. Males invited by formal letter were more likely to participate [RR =2.23, CI (1.59-3.12)].

CONCLUSION: Formal invitation of males using a written letter improved their participation in PMTCT. Writing of a formal letter to invite male partners to attend ANC was recommended to PMTCT program officers.

KEYWORDS: PMTCT, male participation, Zimbabwe