Development of an integrated HIV cascade surveillance system (ACCESS Myanmar) under the National AIDS Program in Myanmar to help guide national strategic HIV strategic responses

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Background: HIV treatment in Myanmar is prescribed exclusively via public ART clinics, with testing performed predominantly by community-based NGO services. Currently, no system is in place to link patient data across these multiple, discrete services. This limits the ability to monitor individual testing and treatment outcomes across the care cascade, and evaluate strategies to improve linkage and retention in care.

Approach: In 2020, the Burnet Institute and the Myanmar National AIDS Program (NAP) will conduct a 12-month feasibility study of “an integrated HIV cascade surveillance system”, ACCESS Myanmar. Based on the Australian ACCESS system, ACCESS Myanmar will track individual patients’ HIV testing and treatment episodes across a network of 21 HIV services in southern districts of Yangon, including NAP treatment sites and NGO testing sites (Première Urgence Internationale and Pyi Gyi Khin).

GRHANITE™ software will extract anonymous patient testing and treatment data and link these using non-identifying and encrypted “hash codes” created from routinely collected patient information. This will enable anonymous tracking of patients’ progress through the cascade of care within and between services. The system will prospectively generate HIV surveillance outcomes that align with Myanmar’s HIV National Strategic Plan, including rates of repeated HIV testing, HIV incidence, viral suppression and patient retention.

Outcomes: Crucial implementation lessons to date include; 1) strong co-operative relationships with partners, 2) identifying sufficiently unique patient data to create data linkage “hash codes”, 3) different data management platforms used by implementing partners, 4) data of varying quality, and 5) building data management capacity among partners.

Innovation and Significance: Improved data surveillance and linkage will facilitate clinic-based monitoring, evaluation and program learning to inform differentiated care strategies and improve care delivery. ACCESS Myanmar will evaluate a HIV cascade monitoring system in a resource limited setting, potentially demonstrating a robust system replicable in other international contexts.

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