



HIV co-infections in INFANTS: THE CASE OF CYTOMEGALOVIRUS (CMV)

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Learn About African Action on AIDS (AAA)

AAA is a tax exempt non-profit organization registered in the USA and operating under section 501(c) 3 of the IRS code. It is also registered in Cameroon (auth. No00174/A/MINAT/DAP/SDLP/SAC). It has special consultative status with the United Nations ECOSOC and the UN Department of Information.

AAA's work is based on 3 programmes:

"JUST KNOW" Campaign emphasizes:

- Knowledge of one's body
- Knowledge that leads to behavior change
- Knowledge that helps to visualize a future without AIDS

"Health before Wealth" Concept promotes:

- Testing for HIV
- Clean hands (hand washing stations)
- Clean water (drinking stations)
- Dignified toilets
- Fighting against Malaria (treated mosquito bed nets)
- Vaccination
- Anti worms medicine

"Women's economic autonomy" through our Scholarship Programme. This scholarship enables each teenage orphan girl to complete at least a secondary, general or technical education that will lead to financial and economic autonomy, greatly reducing the risk of being infected with HIV through sexual abuse and violence.

CMV is a viral infection which is very common in humans but rarely causes disease in healthy persons. It can cause life-threatening diseases only when the immune system is weak such as in HIV-infected persons, organ transplant recipients, or in new born infants. In infants infected with HIV, CMV co-infection may cause serious illnesses which could involve the lungs, nervous system, gastrointestinal tract, the eye and the ear, sometimes leading to blindness, as well as loss of hearing.

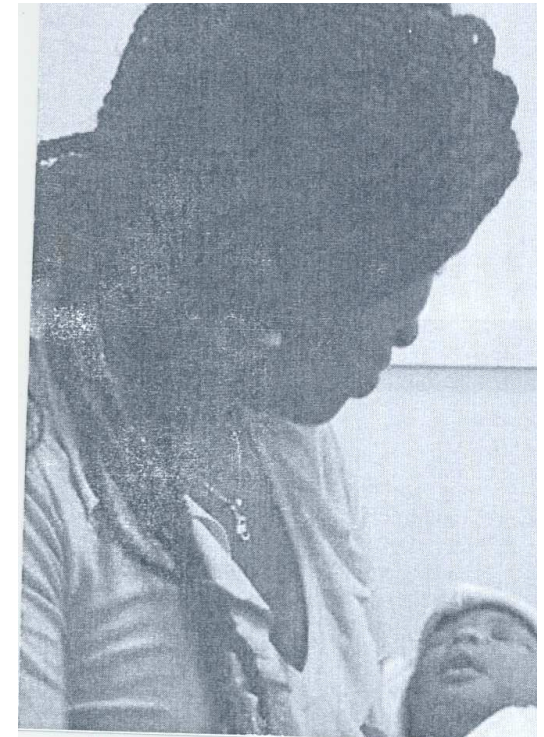
In Cameroon and in most African countries, about 50% of HIV infected infants are also CMV infected by the time they are 6 months old. It could therefore be suggested that some of the complications observed in HIV infected infants who are not on treatment are a result of CMV infection. Starting a very early treatment against HIV (antiretroviral therapy), in HIV/CMV co-infected infants – about 3 months old – would consequently strengthen their immune system while helping to avoid diseases caused by CMV.

The process of early HIV infant treatment starts with early diagnosis of HIV infants born to HIV infected mothers. Once this has been done, early treatment could be carried out in regular HIV treatment centres.

However when diagnosis and treatment of HIV are delayed, the immune system could be weakened by HIV, giving room for CMV to cause diseases and even deaths. Early HIV treatment could hence become an important element in building a strong immunity in infants HIV/CMV co-infected.

EARLY DIAGNOSIS and EARLY TREATMENT of HIV in children is therefore becoming a solution, not only to HIV infections but also to the different diseases caused by CMV infections.

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The impact of early diagnosis and treatment of HIV in children' health and survival

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