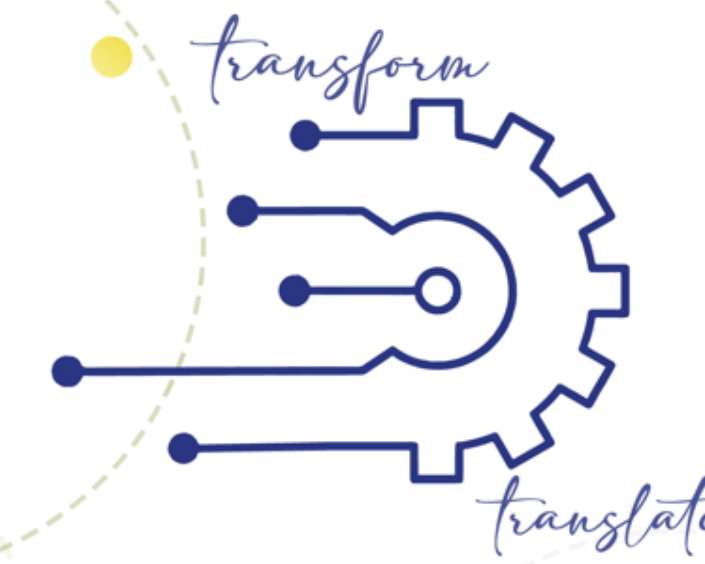


A facility-based psychosocial support model to improve antiretroviral treatment outcomes among adolescents

Mthembu N¹, Mbanjwa N¹, Ngcobo N¹, Myeni R¹, Bhana R¹, Bhengu P¹

¹Health Systems Trust

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TRANSFORMING RESEARCH
TRANSLATION-
REIMAGINING
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BACKGROUND

Adolescents living with HIV often face numerous challenges that hinder their adherence to treatment (ART) regimens, affecting both their physical health and psychosocial well-being. In response, a facility-based psychosocial support model was developed and implemented at facility level to address these challenges comprehensively.

Treatment outcomes are poor among adolescents living with HIV when compared to other age groups, requiring tailored approaches to address the complex behavioural, psychosocial and social issues faced along their treatment journey. These issues undermine their ability to adhere to and continue in care.

Staff at Eastwood Clinic in uMgungundlovu District, KwaZulu-Natal, recognised the need for a holistic approach to improve treatment outcomes among HIV-positive adolescents. Research indicated that psychosocial factors, including stigma, lack of family support, and mental health issues, were significant barriers to ART adherence.

To tackle these issues, a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals, a Social Worker, and the Unfinished Business Project Technical Team collaborated to design a tailored intervention.

OBJECTIVES

To improve the treatment adherence and viral load suppression rate among adolescents aged 15–19 years through implementation of a tailored facility-based psychosocial model

METHODOLOGY

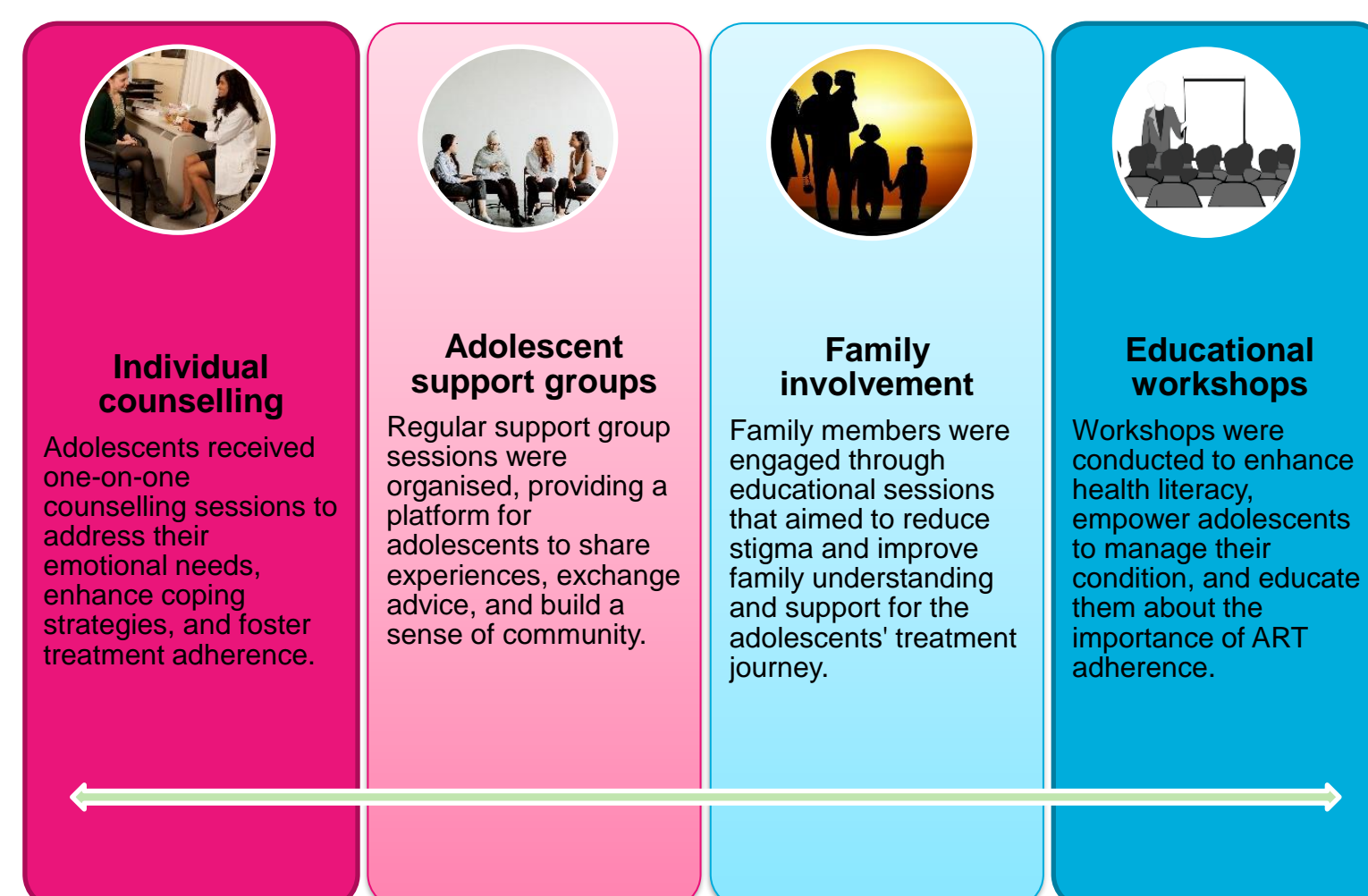
A desktop review and file audit of adherence and viral load suppression data for adolescents aged 15–19 years were conducted at Eastwood Clinic. These data informed the intervention pillars of the psychosocial model that was implemented from September 2022 to March 2023.

The model entailed addressing the biological, behavioural and psychosocial factors affecting treatment adherence in this age group through the establishment of adolescent adherence support groups for addressing barriers to disclosure, patient case management, and clinical recording.

Intervention:

The facility-based psychosocial support model comprised several components

Figure 1: The facility-based psychosocial support model



Implementation:

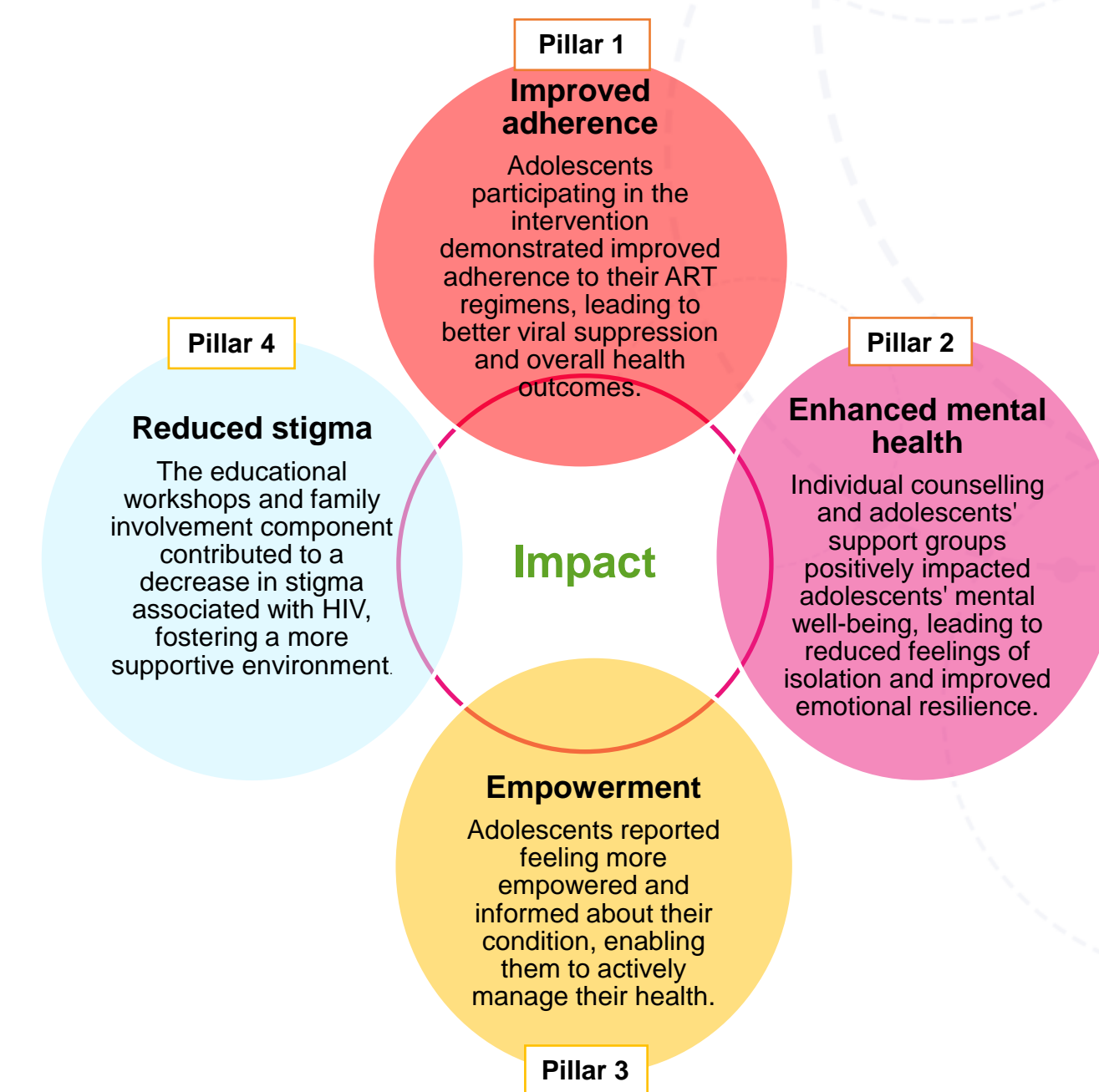
The psychosocial support model was integrated into the routine care provided at the clinic. Trained healthcare professionals were responsible for conducting counselling sessions, facilitating support groups, and leading workshops. The clinic staff also collaborated with local community organisations to ensure a comprehensive support network.

For the analysis, data were extracted from TIER.Net and validated using registers and clinical charts. Viral load suppression rates were calculated using Microsoft Excel, with data disaggregated by quarterly performance.

RESULTS

The implementation of the facility-based psychosocial support model yielded several positive outcomes.

Figure 2: Outcomes of the facility-based psychosocial support model implementation



CONCLUSIONS

The delivery of focused and intensified psychosocial support interventions by facility-based staff is a proven strategy to understand and address issues inhibiting optimal adherence to ART among adolescents living with HIV.

The facility-based psychosocial support model proved effective in enhancing antiretroviral treatment outcomes among this age group. By addressing psychosocial barriers and providing a supportive environment, this intervention not only improved adherence, but also contributed to the holistic wellbeing of adolescents.

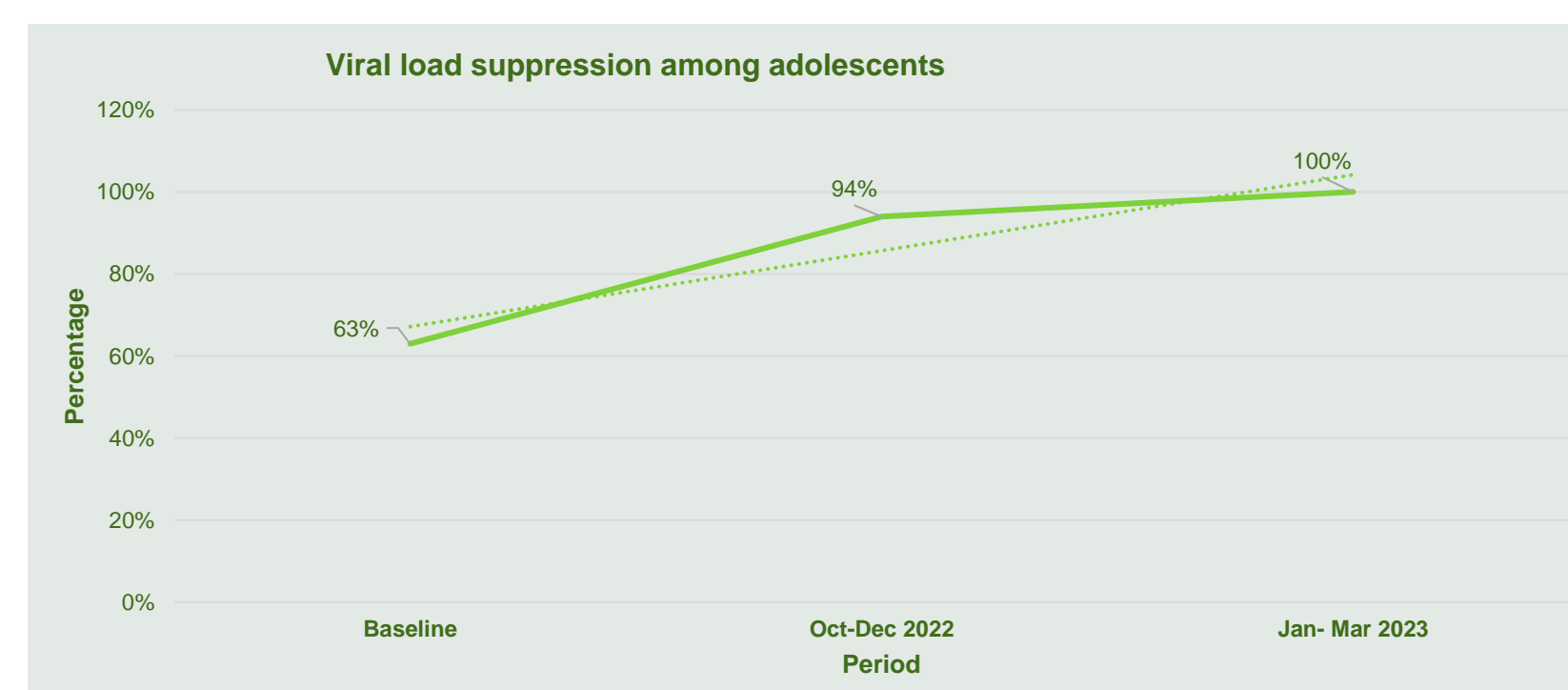
The success of this case study highlights the importance of integrating psychosocial support within healthcare facilities to optimise treatment outcomes and quality of life for vulnerable populations.



Facility-based psychosocial support groups

The viral load suppression rate for adolescents at this facility improved from 63% at baseline to 94% between October and December 2022, and was sustained at 100% between January and March 2023.

Figure 3: Eastwood Clinic adolescent viral load suppression rate – improvement



ADVOCACY MESSAGE

As South Africa strives to achieve HIV epidemic control, this evidence suggests that facility-level psychosocial interventions are valuable for improving sustained treatment outcomes for adolescents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONTACT

Presenting author: Nondumiso Mthembu

Cell-phone: 060 855 5665

Nondumiso.Mthembu@hst.org.za | www.hst.org.za