

# Improving Survival of Hospitalized Children with HIV:

## When should treatment begin?

Join the discussion:

Use **#everybodycounts** and **#myrighttohealth** on World AIDS Day.

# 36.7 million\*

people living with HIV, globally



# 51% of the 1.8 million\*

children under the age of 15 living with HIV are not accessing antiretroviral therapy



**In Sub-Saharan Africa, mortality of children with HIV** who arrive at a hospital for care when they are severely ill **is high: 21% or ~1 in 4** die within six months post-hospitalization.

Health care workers often wait to start antiretroviral therapy (ART) until after treatment for acute infections (such as tuberculosis or pneumonia).

### When to start ART in hospitalized children?

Starting ART urgently (not waiting until after treatment for other infections such as tuberculosis or pneumonia) had no apparent disadvantages.

The study found no effect in mortality in those who started ART in 1 day vs. those who started 8 days after enrollment.

## What is the PUSH trial?

The Pediatric Urgent Start of HAART (PUSH) trial compared timing of ART initiation among HIV-infected hospitalized children. Children who started on ART within 1 day after enrollment were compared to those who were started 8 days after enrollment, to better understand what is the optimal timing of ART initiation in sick, hospitalized children with HIV.

### The power of antiretroviral medicines: saving lives

If antiretroviral therapy is initiated early and taken for life, life expectancy of people living with HIV is thought to be the same as that of someone without HIV.

### How can we prevent early mortality of children with HIV?

The study confirms that for severely ill children with HIV, earlier ART alone is insufficient to prevent early mortality.

**The study found that 1/3 of children taking part in the trial had previously been hospitalized, showing frequent missed opportunities for earlier HIV testing and ART initiation.**

### To optimize survival of children, health care workers must:

Ensure earlier identification and treatment for HIV *before* disease progression.

Educate parents to test children for HIV before disease progression.

➤ For more information about the study, see **'Timing of Antiretroviral Therapy in Children with Advanced HIV'** in *The Lancet*.