EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED
“EFFECT OF MULTIVITAMIN SUPPLEMENTATION AND DIET COUNSELING ON HIV DISEASE PROGRESSION AMONG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)”

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INTRODUCTION

Adequate nutrition helps to maintain and improve the nutritional and immunological status of a person with HIV/AIDS and delay the progression of the disease. Adequate nutrition will complement the effects of retroviral therapies and will help to maintain body weight and fitness, as well as improve the performance of the immune system. Deficiency of micronutrients, especially antioxidants is a common condition in HIV infected subjects, which can occur in all stages of the disease. Hence, a study was carried out to assess the “Effect of multivitamin supplementation and diet counseling on HIV disease progression among People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)”.

OBJECTIVES
To ascertain the personal characteristics of the subjects

To assess the socio economic status of the families

To assess the food and nutrient intake of the subjects

To assess the effect of multivitamin supplementation and diet counseling on HIV disease progression.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The present study entitled “Effect of multivitamin supplementation and diet counseling on HIV disease progression among People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)” was conducted among the HIV positive subjects in the age group of 20–50 years, undergoing ART at different parts of Kerala.

Personal characteristics of the subjects revealed that fifty per cent of them were in the age group of 30 - 40 years and forty four per cent of them were in the age group of 40 - 50 year. All the subjects studied were in low educational status. Seventy eight per cent of the subjects were living with these parameters while sixteen per cent of the subjects were widows.

Regarding the source of infection, the subjects acquired the infection through extra marital relationship, infected partners or premarital relationship. The subjects diagnosed the infection due to various reasons such as tests during pregnancy, persistent infections or tests done for emigration purpose.

The quantity of food items consumed by the subjects were unbalanced and as a result, deficient intakes of nutrients were noticed. Visible deficiency
symptoms in hair, eyes and mouth were observed in addition to problems in elementary system and respiratory system.

The changes in blood parameters such as haemoglobin, CD4 count, vitamin A and E were noticed among the subjects after diet counseling and multivitamin supplementation. In the case of CD4 count, all the subjects were stepped up to their lowest level to upper level of this 78 per cent of the subjects attained the normal level CD4 count. The findings of the study can be concluded that the health status of the HIV/AIDS subjects can be improved through proper treatment with micronutrient supplementation and diet counseling/nutrition education.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIETY

- Nutrition is the key component in managing the conditions of HIV/AIDS
- Nutrition education and diet counseling are helpful to reduce the risk factors in HIV/AIDS, thus improve their health status
- Micronutrient supplementation enhances the immune system which inturn reduces the opportunistic infections among the subjects

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the salient observations made in the study, following suggestions are made,

- Socio economic status of the HIV infected subjects should be improved through better education, employment and life situation.
- Educate the HIV/AIDS subjects with regard to the need of nutrition to improve health status and to relieve from infectious diseases.
Nutritional assessment shall be a part of clinical evaluation of HIV positive patients through health centres, rehabilitation centres, ART centres, hospitals etc.

ART centres are equipped with professionally trained Nutritionist/Dietitian.

Provide facilities for correcting the nutritional deficiency through micronutrient supplementation according to the need of the patient.

Impart nutrition/diet counseling facilities for HIV/AIDS subjects in coordination with doctors/clinitians.