

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/couples-voluntary-hiv-counseling-and-testing-cvct-followed-by-treatment-as-prevention-tasp-for-discordant-couples/>

This video describes the speaker's experiences and insights related to the HIV epidemic in Africa, starting from their arrival in late 1985. Initially training in San Francisco, they were familiar with HIV cases but were shocked to find a high prevalence (29%) of HIV antibodies among pregnant women in Rwanda shortly after the epidemic began to be recognized in Africa. The speaker notes a significant difference in how HIV was transmitted in Africa compared to the West, emphasizing that most infections occurred within cohabiting couples rather than through high-risk behaviors like drug use or sex work.

As understanding of HIV transmission evolved, the speaker and their colleagues promoted couples testing, recognizing the importance of both partners being aware of their HIV status to reduce transmission risks. The speaker details the development of educational and counseling strategies tailored to different couple dynamics, emphasizing the need for joint testing and communication about HIV status, particularly in discordant couples (where one partner is positive and the other negative).

The implementation of antiretroviral treatment began in Africa around 2007, which further shifted counseling messages towards both health maintenance for the positive partner and prevention of transmission to the negative partner. Research showed that couples testing led to a two-thirds reduction in transmission rates and that this was a more cost-effective strategy compared to solely relying on treatment as prevention.

Despite notable successes, the speaker highlights that many couples in countries like Zambia still do not receive joint testing, mainly due to a lack of national policy and resources. They conclude by advocating for the importance of couples testing in strengthening unions, facilitating discussions about family planning, and effectively addressing both HIV prevention and reproductive goals.