

ART initiated before 12 weeks
reduces early mortality in
young HIV-infected infants:
evidence from the Children with HIV Early
Antiretroviral Therapy (CHER) Study

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Rationale

- Treatment of HIV infected infants is complex
 - High risk of death and disease progression in infancy
 - CD4 and viral load are poor predictors of disease progression in infants
 - Initiation of ARV's commits to lifelong therapy
- No comparative prospective data to inform ART guidelines
- Current approaches:
 - Consider treatment for all infants as soon as identified (US Guidelines)
 - Treat when reach CD4 or clinical criteria (WHO Guidelines)
 - Either of the above, and include viral load criteria (European PENTA Guidelines)

CHER Trial - Hypothesis

- Early limited ART until 1st or 2nd birthday will:
 - Have long-term benefit by delaying disease progression
 - Delay the time when long-term continuous ART needs to be started

CHER Trial Part A n= 375

HIV infection diagnosed before 12 weeks and CD4% >25%

Arm 1
Deferred
treatment
N=125

Arm 2
Short course
(to first birthday)
N=125

Arm 3
Long course
(to second birthday)
N=125

ART (start or re-start) when CD4% <20% or clinical event
(<25% from August 2006)

FOLLOW UP
For a minimum of 3.5 years

CHER Trial Design (Part A)

- **Inclusion:**
 - DNA PCR confirmed HIV infection
 - CD4 >25%
 - ART naïve except for pMTCT
 - Age <12 weeks
- ART: ZDV + 3TC + LPV/r
- All children received Co-trimoxazole and Pneumococcal vaccine
- **Endpoints:**
 - **Primary:** Death OR failure of 1st line ART regimen
 - **Secondary, including:**
 - Cumulative rate of disease progression and hospitalisation
 - Grade 3 & 4 adverse events
 - Development of ART Resistance

Criteria for starting ART in Arm 1

- Immunological criteria
 - CD4% <20% (WHO guidelines 2003)Then from August 2006:
 - CD4% <25% or CD4 count <1000cells/mm³ if age <12mo
- Clinical Criteria
 - CDC Stage C
 - Selected Stage B:
 - Severe lung disease including LIP
 - Nephropathy
 - Cardiomyopathy
 - FTT in absence of remediable causes
 - Recurrent bacterial pneumonia
 - Severe or recurrent oral candidiasis

DSMB Review (20 June 2007)

- DSMB recommended modification of the study
 - release results of Arm 1 versus Arms 2&3 combined
 - infants in Arm 1 not already on ART should be urgently recalled and assessed for ART
 - trial follow-up to continue
- Interim data presented after median follow-up of 32 (*IQR: 20-48) weeks

Baseline characteristics

5985 babies were screened using DNA PCR to enrol 377 HIV pos infants

Variable	Arm 2 & 3		Arm 1	
Number of participants enrolled	252		125	
Sex: Female (%)	147	(58.3 %)	74	(59 %)
Age (weeks, median (IQR))	7.4	(6.6 - 8.9)	7.1	(6.4 - 8.9)
Mother receiving ART for PMTCT				
No Therapy	26	(10.3 %)	15	(12 %)
NVP (%)	162	(64.3 %)	72	(58 %)
AZT (%)	8	(3.2 %)	5	(4 %)
AZT + NVP (%)	51	(20.2 %)	26	(21 %)
HAART (%)	2	(0.8 %)	5	(4 %)
Weight (Median IQR (kg))	4.4	(4.0 - 4.9)	4.5	(4.0 - 5.0)
CDC Classification				
Class N & A (%)	237	(94.0 %)	121	(96.8 %)
Class B (%)	11	(4.4 %)	3	(2.4 %)
CD4 % (median (IQR))	35.1	(29.1 - 40.8)	35.6	(29 -43.8)
CD4 Count (cells/mm ³) median (IQR)	2035	(1519-2754)	2044	(1585-2960)

Follow-up and use of ART

Variable	Arm 2 & 3 n = 252	Arm 1 n = 125
Lost to follow-up	10 (4.0 %)	4 (3.2 %)
No. of participants initiating ART	250	61
Participants on ART at:		
Week 12	98.2 %	18.1 %
Week 24	96.5 %	48.8 %
Week 32	95.6 %	59.0 %
Week 40	95.0 %	52.3 %
% time spent on ART by week 40	98.6 %	32.0 %

Mortality Rates

Variable	Arm 2 & 3 n = 252	Arm 1 n = 125	Total n = 377
Died (%)	10 (4%)	20 (16%)	30 (8%)
Person Years of follow-up	167	79	246
Rate per 100 PY (95% CI)	6.0 (2.9; 10)	25.3 (15.5; 39.0)	12.2 (8.2; 17.4)
Hazard Ratio			0.24 (0.11; 0.51)
P - value			0.0002

Time to Death



Patients at risk

	Month 0	Month 3	Month 6	Month 9	Month 12
Arm 1	125	104	72	44	22
Arm 2 & Arm 3	252	213	145	99	52

Risk of death

- Death rate per 100 person-years (Arm 2&3 vs. 1)
 - 3 months 10 vs. 41
 - 3 to 6 months 4 vs. 23
 - 6 to 12 months 3 vs. 9

Causes of Death

Variable	Arm 2 & 3	Arm 1	Total
Died at home/unknown	4	8	12
Gastroenteritis	4	4	8
Pneumonia/sepsis	0	5	5
PCP /CMV	0	3	3
SIDS	1	0	1
Liver failure	1	0	1
Total	10	20	30

Disease progression in all patients

Variable	Arm 2 & 3 n = 252	Arm 1 n = 125	Total
Failure to thrive	18	19	37
Developmental delay	0	8	8
PCP	0	5	5
Oesophageal candidiasis	0	2	2
Extrapulmonary TB	1	1	1
CMV colitis	0	1	1
CMV pneumonia	0	2	2
CMV Hepatitis	0	1	1
Pneumococcal disease	0	2	2
Number Events	19	41	60
Number patients	19	38	57

Summary & Conclusions

- Starting ART before 12 weeks of age reduces early mortality by 75%
- Findings have implications for guidelines on timing of ART in early infancy
- These results support the need for enhanced pMTCT programmes, early infant diagnosis and effective transition to care.

Acknowledgements



Wilma Pelser
Shabir Madhi
Aneesa Naeem Sheik
Melissa Budge
Munira Saleh
Sindile Mashinini
Sibongile Dlamini
Valerie Kemese
Jean Bolton



Amelia Bohle
Anita Janse van Rensburg
Irene Mong
Els Dobbels
Jodie Howard
Tanya Cyster
Marietjie Bester
Wilma Orange
Ronelle Arendze



CIPRA-SA Exco
Wendy Stevens (CLS)
Ravindre Panchia
Christie Davies
Morna Conell
Leon Levin
Tim Peto



Division of AIDS, NIAID, NIH

Ed Handelsman
Jim McNamara
Karen Reese
Sandi Lehrman



Eddie Loeliger
Jean-Marc Steens
Wendy X Snowden



Di Gibb
Ab Babiker



South African Dept. of Health



Dept. of Health, Western Cape



Dept. of Health, Gauteng