

Exploring interest in Long-Acting antiretroviral Injections: perspectives of people living with HIV in Egypt and Saudi Arabia

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INTRODUCTION

Receiving a daily oral dosage of antiretroviral treatment (ART) could be challenging in several cases for People living with HIV (PLHIV) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Therefore, a cross-sectional study was carried to identify willingness of PLHIV to use the long-acting antiretroviral injections (LAI), explore the factors associated with interest in trying LAI among PLHIV, and to evaluate perceived benefits and constraints of using LAI from PLHIV's perspective.

METHODS

A validated survey was used after customization to fit PLHIV in Egypt and Saudi Arabia (KSA). An overview of the LAI was provided, consent form was taken, and data was gathered from 624 PLHIV; 363 Egypt and 261 KSA, between October 2023- June 2024 at Cairo University Hospitals HIV clinic, Egypt and East Jeddah Hospital, KSA. Descriptive statistics was performed via EXCEL and SPSS V23.

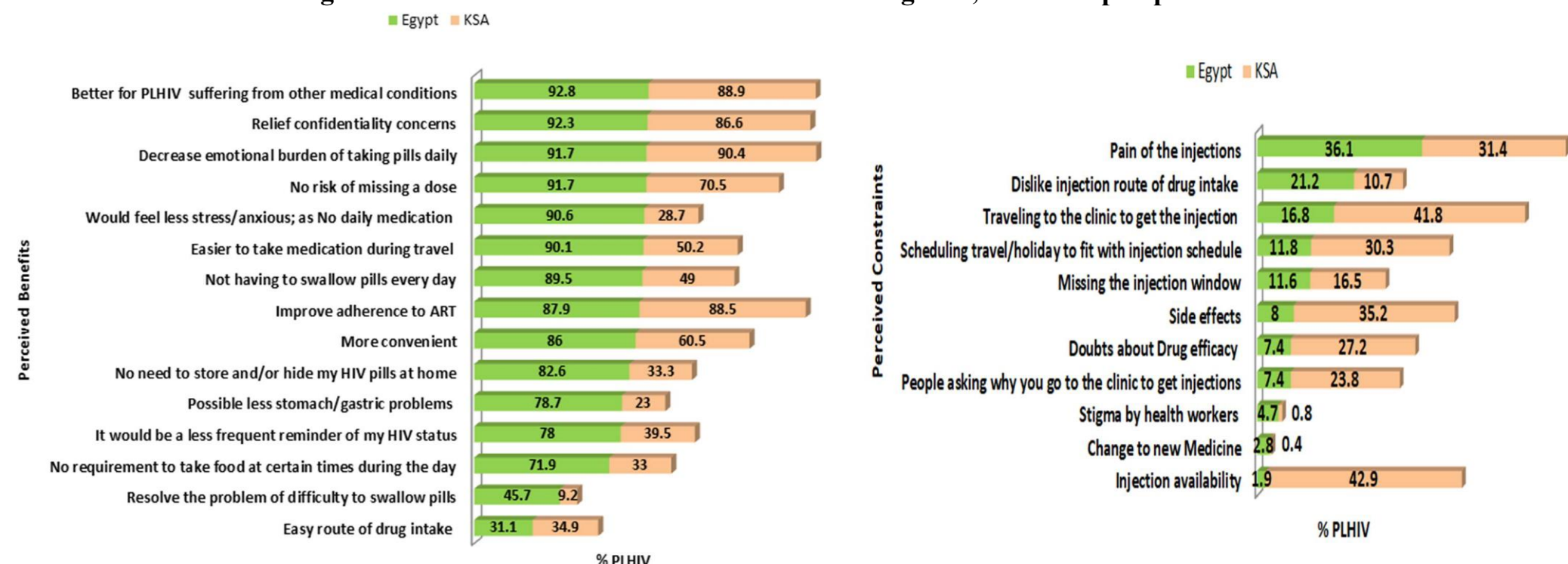
RESULTS

Of the enrolled PLHIV, 79.6% (275 in Egypt, 222 in KSA) were males, and 70.8% were in the age group of 18 to 39 years. Additionally, 60.7% (240 in Egypt, 139 in KSA) were diagnosed with HIV in the last 4 years. All participants were on ART, and of these, 90.9% (328 in Egypt, 239 in KSA) expressed a high interest in LAI.

The majority of participants had concerns about confidentiality regarding their condition. Specifically, 68.6% of PLHIV (313 in Egypt, 115 in KSA) informed only people very close to them about their condition, while 27.1% (42 in Egypt, 127 in KSA) were afraid of self-disclosure. Moreover, 29.2% (117 in Egypt, 62 in KSA) reported negative feelings toward ART, and 45.3% (193 in Egypt, 84 in KSA) were neutral.

Participants from both countries agreed on the top four perceived benefits (see Figure 1), although each cohort reported different constraints. The main constraint among PLHIV in Egypt was the pain associated with injections, while in KSA, it was the fear of missing a dose due to the lack of LAI availability at all times.

Figure1. Perceived benefits and constraints to using LAI, PLHIV's perspective.



Conclusion

Our findings indicate that LAI may help address PLHIV unmet needs and may be more convenient for many of them.