

# L I G H T H O U S E

## Active Tracing of ART Patients Lost to Follow-up at Lighthouse shows that few 'Stopped' treatment for their own reasons, but many have Died

Hochgesang M, MPH†, Kuyenda A, CO\*, Hosseinipour M, MD‡, Phiri S, CO\*, Weigel R, MD, Msc\*, Mhango E, CO\*, Nkhwazi B\*, Boxshall M\*

†Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Lilongwe, Malawi. \*Lighthouse, Lilongwe, Malawi. ‡University of North Carolina, Lilongwe, Malawi.

### Background

Malawi is rapidly scaling up ART: More than 55,000 patients started on ART. Accurate determination of patient outcomes needed to effectively evaluate National ART Program

Lighthouse is one of the largest public sector HIV/AIDS clinics in Malawi, with more than 3,500 patients on ART. Early evaluation of Lighthouse's ART program revealed a high rate of patients lost to follow-up.

### Study Purpose and Methods

**Study purpose:** In 2005, a study was conducted

- to determine outcome status of these patients
- to evaluate factors associated with various outcomes

Since June 04, Lighthouse has utilized an electronic patient record system (EPRS) to capture patient demographics, clinical visit information, and patient outcomes.

**Sample:** EPRS-registered patients who had

- missed their last appointment by >2 weeks as of June 2005
- consented upon initial registration to be contacted later
- had valid contact information.

**Data Collection:** Patients or their designated guardian were contacted and outcome status determined according to Malawi ART guidelines (Alive, Dead, Defaulters, Stop, Transfer).

### Conclusion

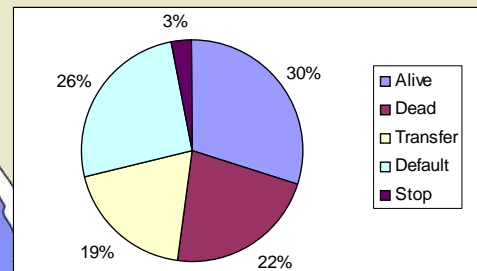
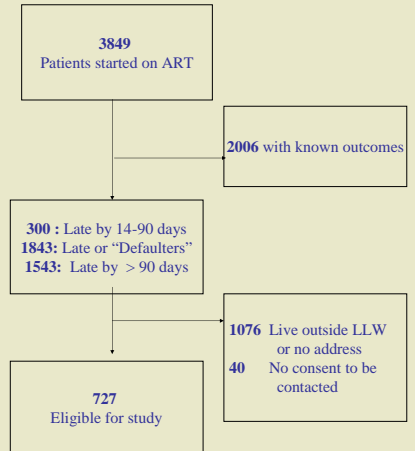
Active Tracing of ART defaulters revealed, that a large proportion had died and few had 'stopped' treatment. ART defaulters remain a concern and prompted the rollout of an active tracing "Back2Care" program.

### Results

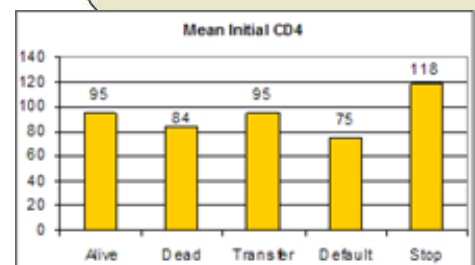
Study Sample Characteristics (n=727)

- 53% female
- 8% pediatric cases
- mean age 34.6 years.

Outcomes from patient tracing of those who were originally categorized as lost to follow up- only 3% of patients traced were found to have stopped ART for their own reasons:



Comparison of Mean Initial CD4 count by Outcome:



- Patients who could not be found during the study (defaulted) had low initial CD4 (median 75) similar to that of patients who had died, suggesting that patients who defaulted might also have died.
- Adults patients who were found to have died had lower initial CD4 (median 84) than patients with other outcomes