

Critical Review by Florence Obadeyi

CHIVA symposium- my journey with meds.

The panel was a group of young people who are members of the CHIVA youth committee. (CYC). The full group comprises of 12 young people aged 12 to 18. They started the 'symposium with a poem. The poem talked about been rejected, neglected and isolated. 'i

I did not choose this. One pill after the other. I am not normal. It is defeating me, meds, wish I did not have to take it. Meds versus you'.

There were four members of the CHIVA youth committee speaking. One has transitioned to adult health care and is finding it difficult. He talked about U=U, 'I feel safe, and do not have to worry about being ill. I can have sex as much as I want without thinking of passing it on'.

One speaker stopped taking her medication and started hiding it. She was told by her doctor, 'If you do not take it 'you will die'. CHIVA camp taught her she is not alone. 'I realised I need to be in control.'

One young person had doctors that 'talked to me and encouraged me'. I had support from doctors' nurses and CHIVA which gave me a sense of confidence and optimism. I met others from CHIVA. I am now a role model, responsible for others to encourage them to take medication. If I can say something to my young self it will be to say it is okay to take meds even if my friends are not taking meds'.

One member of the CYC said he suffered from depression and anxiety and developed negative thinking about his HIV status. He heard about U=U from CHIVA camp and was very happy to find out that he can have children without HIV.

One CYC member was told about her HIV status at 10 years old. Later she had a boyfriend that found out about her HIV. He surprised her by supporting her and reminding her to take her medication. 'U=U means undetectable=safety for me and him'.

Another CYC member was told she took medication because she was slim. 'I was flushing it down the toilet and throwing it away'. CHIVA camp opened my eyes and I now take it every day.

The group feel parents should allow their children to take responsibility of taking their meds and not constantly watching them. They describe the future as bright and they all say they are more confident by the support they get from CHIVA. The CYC asked for a forum to beat isolation. They talked about having more representation in international conferences.

There was a good mixture of communication style in the symposium that made it fun and interesting.