

Life growing up

This is a performance acted by young people. It was used to open up conversation about young people's experience about living with HIV. It was funded by ViiV and produced by CHIVA. There were 3 actors- 1 male and 2 females and 1 adult on the piano. It was in the form of poetry and was very engaging and interesting. It was very emotionally charged just the way a typical young person could react to things happening to them. There was a lot of content about when they were told about their HIV. They showed anger towards the fact that they were not told when they were younger. They expressed how confusing it was to be suddenly told they have a life treating illness and need to be on medication for life. They talked about how medication makes them ill. How they flush it down the toilet without sharing this with their parents. They talked about how Mum was in tears after telling them about their HIV statuses and how this made them more. Another spoke of how his Mum had told him his Dad died of cancer when probably Dad died of HIV.

Then they spoke of stigma. That you cannot get HIV from holding hands or living with them. They talked about the need to educate people on how HIV is passed on. They talked about U=U. Then they talked about mental health problems like anxiety and depression. They talked about side effects like vomiting and feeling sick. It ended on a positive note where they talked about friends and partners being supportive and feeling loved and how they discovered CHIVA and attended camp where they met other young people just like them. They talked about the bond they felt with other young people. The film is on youtube and people can also see cut down sections of the film. All stories are true.

What strikes me most was the emotion that the young people expressed which was mainly around been told about their HIV when they were near teen age or as teenagers. This shows that young children living with HIV would benefit more from being told as young as they can understand the information so this becomes a normality in the family and will reduce the sense of isolation and shame. Also, the performance highlighted how children in transition need more support.