

**The Zimbabwe Patients' Charter of Rights:  
Effects on Health Care Access by People with Disabilities  
Living with HIV and AIDS**

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**ABSTRACT** This study sought to: (a) examine the role of the Zimbabwe Patients' Charter of Rights in enabling health care access by people with disabilities living with HIV and AIDS; and (b) explore policy translational issues influencing access to HIV and AIDS treatment and care services by people with disabilities living with HIV and AIDS. A survey approach was used to collect data in this study. A purposive sample of 35 people with disabilities living with HIV and AIDS in a rural district of Zimbabwe was used. Participants self-reported on their awareness of Patients' Rights in the context of the national charter; perceived access to competent health care and treatment services; access to information on HIV/AIDS issues, national healthy policies and skills available at community level to work with people with disabilities on HIV/AIDS issues. The study found that people with disabilities perceive health care as a basic right. However, people with disabilities also reported significant barriers to access competent healthcare and treatment. Most often, their treatment and care were significantly delayed, and where it was offered, individuals with hearing, visual impairments and intellectual disabilities were stereotyped as incompetent patients unable to represent or articulate their health care needs.