

## **Perceptions and Attitudes of Health Workers towards Patients Co-infected with HIV and Tuberculosis**

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**ABSTRACT** Increase in the prevalence of HIV and co-infection with Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the major contributors to the increased burden of diseases in the South African health system. The health workers play a crucial role in providing a caring, non-discriminatory and quality health services to patients co-infected with HIV and TB. However, different behavioral patterns that often emanate from the health workers have direct influences on the health seeking behavior of the patients. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe by means of a qualitative approach the perceptions and attitudes of health workers regarding patients co-infected with HIV and TB. A purposive voluntary sampling method was used to select health workers caring for patients co-infected with HIV and TB in a primary health care context in two semi-urban areas in the North West Province in South Africa. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and continued until enough health workers were interviewed for a rich description with little new knowledge generated on their perceptions and attitudes towards patients co-infected with HIV and TB. Data analysis was done by means of an open coding method. The health workers identified common behaviors displayed towards the patients, some that were negative and perceived as stigmatizing behaviors. Some of the behaviors referred to were impatience and caring for these patients only out of obligation. Positive behaviors such as advocating and feelings of empathy towards the patients were also reported. The study concluded that the perceptions and attitudes of the health workers towards the patients co-infected with HIV and TB plays a significant role in how these patients utilize the health services.