

The cascade of care for early infant diagnosis in Zimbabwe: Point of care HIV testing at birth and 6-8 weeks

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INTRODUCTION

- Routine birth testing of HIV exposed infants using point of care (POC) nucleic acid testing may allow for earlier diagnosis and treatment of HIV-infected infants than current methods
- More data are needed on retention in care for those diagnosed at birth and percent who re-test as recommended after a negative HIV birth test

METHODS

- POC birth testing (within 48 hours of birth) was offered to all HIV-exposed infants (HEI) born at ten public maternities in Zimbabwe from November 2018 to July 2019
- Data were collected using a national risk screen to determine risk of HIV transmission and routine registers, including information on re-testing at 6–8 weeks for infants testing negative at birth and six-month retention in care among infants testing HIV-infected at birth

In Zimbabwe, point of care birth testing for infants exposed to HIV was highly feasible, but almost 1/3 of infants who were infected at birth were not initiated on ART. While those started on ART were likely to remain on ART at 6 months, intensive efforts to initiate ART in infants found to be HIV-infected at birth are needed.

RESULTS

- Of 2854 eligible HEI, 2806 (98.3%) received POC HIV birth testing. 39 HIV-infected infants were identified (1.4%), and 23 (59%) were started on ART
- 22 infants (56%) were documented as continuing ART at six months
- Of the 2694 infants who tested negative at birth, 1229 (46.5%) had a documented re-testing at 6-8 weeks, and 7 (0.6%) of those infants tested positive on the subsequent test

DISCUSSION

- Uptake of POC birth testing was high in the 10 study facilities
- ART initiation was low, but of infants initiated on ART, there was high retention in care
- Among infants who tested negative at birth, rates of testing at 6-8 weeks of life were comparable to national rates of testing at 6-8 weeks (56%)
- Increasing initiation of newborns with HIV on ART and improving follow-up for infants requiring re-testing remain priorities

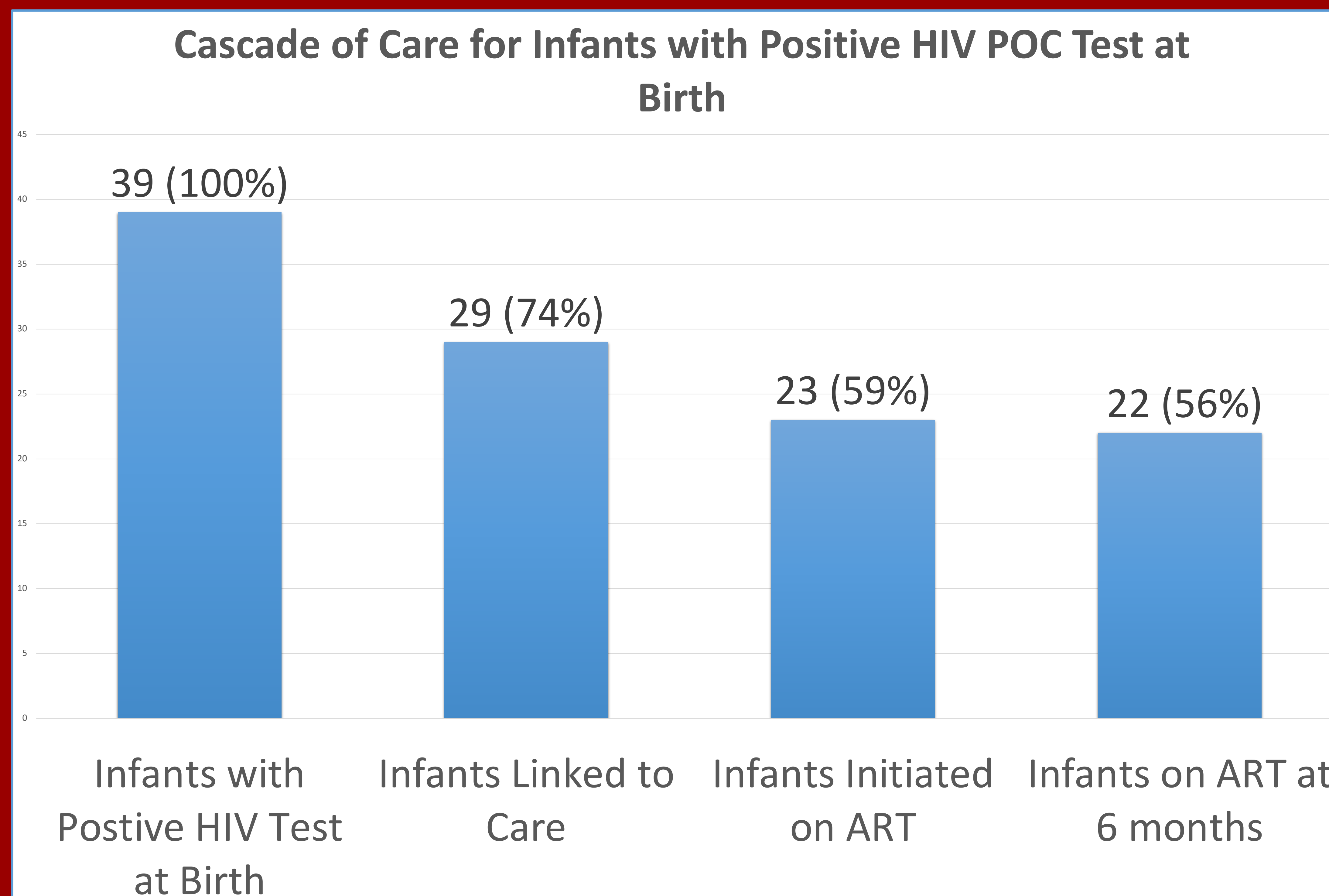
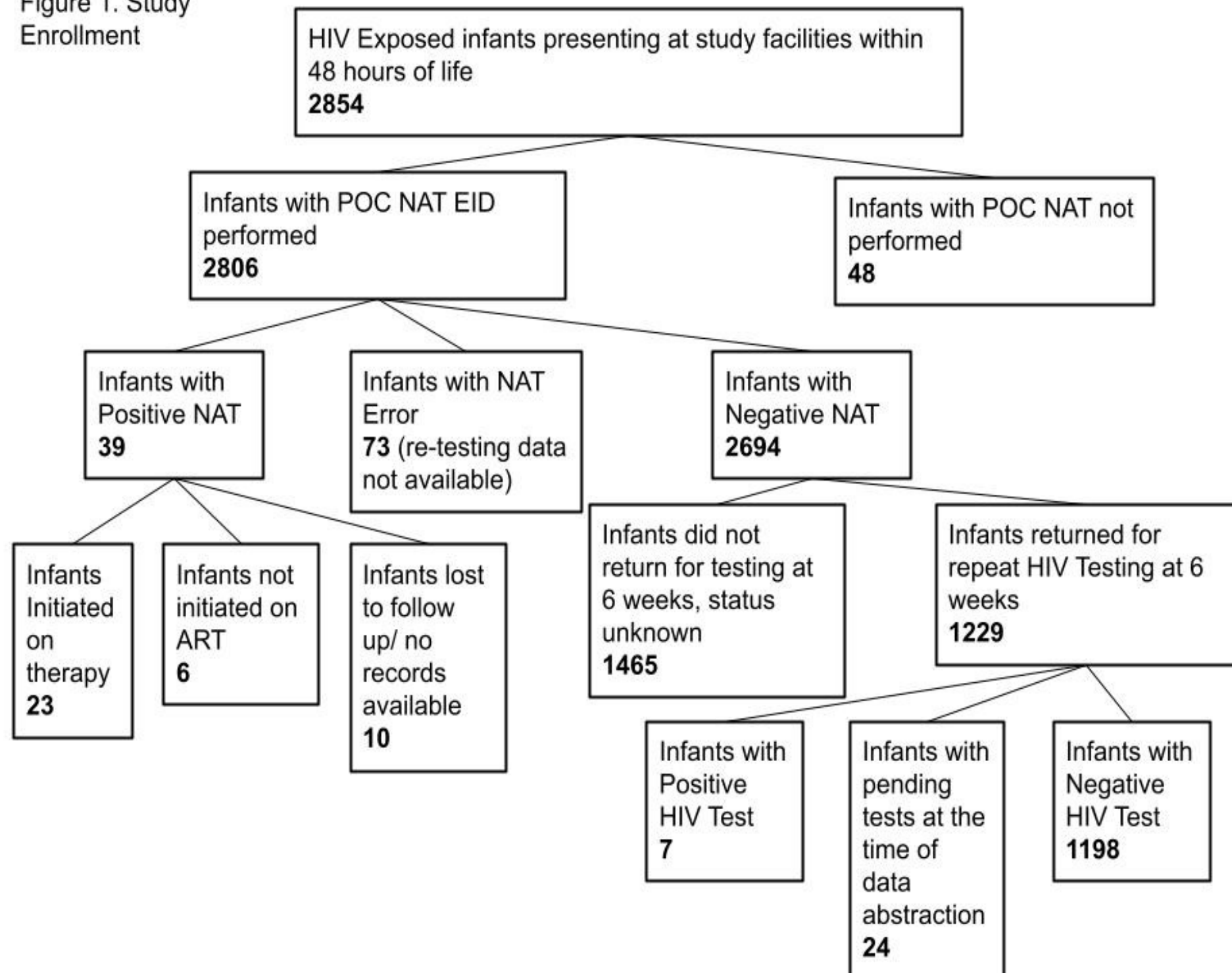


Figure 1. Study Enrollment



References:

UNICEF Pediatric HIV Dashboard [database online]. https://data.unicef.org/dv_index/. Accessed November 2, 2020.



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