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EFFECT OF JOBELYN, A NIGERIAN HERBAL EXTRACT ON THE CELLULAR IMMUNITY OF PERSONS LIVING WITH HUMAN IMMUNE DEFICIENCY VIRUS AND AIDS

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Background: Antiretroviral management of HIV infection particularly in developing countries presents multiple challenges, including problems of adherence to therapy and access to care. This is compounded by the rising number of infected people in the world's most populous nations including Nigeria. Therefore, we evaluated the efficiency of a commercial herbal preparation, Jobelyn, in enhancing cellular immunity in HIV infected patients.

Method: Forty eight patients (27 males and 21 females) who regularly attended clinic at Military Hospital, Lagos between May and September, 2003 were used for this study. They were confirmed to be HIV 1 and 2 positive using western blot technique. Their CD4 counts were determined using the Coulter counting method at 0, 6 and 12 weeks. All subjects had initial basal packed cell volume, creatinine, bilirubin, alkaline phosphatase, alanine transferase and aspartic acid transferase estimations. Each patient was placed on one Jobelyn capsule twice daily for the 12 weeks. Patients with CD4 counts lower than 350/ μ l had, in addition, triple antiretroviral cocktail of Nevirapine, Lamivudine and Stavudine.

Results: The mean CD4 count for the patients were 330.19, 439.75 and 572.65 at 0, 6 and 12 weeks, respectively. There was remarkable increase in CD4 T lymphocyte count in 42 (87.5%) of the patients. There was varying degrees of reduction in the CD4 T lymphocyte count in 6 (12.5%) of the patients who were confirmed to have concurrent infections including tuberculosis and severe pneumonia. These 6 subjects showed a remarkable increase in their CD4 T lymphocyte count by the 12th week when the treatments of the concurrent infections commenced. Generally, patients having CD4 counts of 30 - 300/ μ l showing a 200-300% rise while those with CD4 counts >300/ μ l had a marginal rise of 20-30% in their CD 4 count. There was improvement in the general well-being of all the subjects as well as increase in appetite and weight. The maculo-papular skin rash of 3 of the patients who had Herpes zoster's remitted.

Conclusion: The commercial herbal preparation, Jobelyn, increases cellular immunity in HIV positive individuals either alone or in combination with antiretroviral drugs. The product could be a good alternative and/or supplement to antiretroviral drugs in the management of HIV/AIDS patients.