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BACKGROUND

The Medical Research Foundation (MRFTT) is the largest HIV treatment facility in Trinidad and Tobago, accounting for 75% patients on antiretroviral therapy (ART) nationally. Beginning in March 2010, the MRFTT implemented a Rapid Triage Model integrating COVID-19 risk prevention during patient visits. The objectives were to (1) maximize opportunities for COVID-19 risk identification (2) reduce patient waiting times; and (3) improve patient retention in care.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The routine flow of patients was modified and expanded to the exterior of the building to reduce overcrowding and for social distancing measures. A list of patients is generated daily and persons are called in advance of their scheduled appointments and prioritized based on their needs and clinical status. Patients who arrive at the MRFTT are screened for COVID-19 risk, stable patients are offered multi-month prescriptions; non-virally suppressed patients are prioritized to see a physician, for laboratory testing or adherence counselling. Patients identified as high risk for COVID-19 receive appropriate referrals based on MOH guidelines.

LESSONS LEARNED

Data extracted from electronic patient records, ART dispensing logs, and patient registration forms were used to monitor program outcomes. Over the period (March and April), there was 100% uptake in COVID-19 risk screening during patient visits. Patient waiting times were reduced from one hour to 35 minutes. ART retention during the first 3 months was maintained at 84%.

CONCLUSION

The Rapid Triage Model to integrate COVID-19 risk reduction screening during patient visits is an innovative and pragmatic approach to optimizing the delivery of ART services.