



## **The Efficacy of African Herbal Medicine (METRAFAIDS) in the Treatment of HIV Positive African Populations – Report of Clinical Observational Study\***

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**Background:** Three cohorts of HIV positive individuals (62 patients – 18 men, 44 women) were treated with a combination African herbal medicine (METRAFAIDS) for six-month intervals between 1999-2002 at the Experimental Center for Traditional Medicine in Fatick, Senegal under the supervision of traditional healers and a physician. Ages ranged from 18 to 58 years. All patients were married and contracted HIV through heterosexual contact.

**Methods:** Study criteria included HIV positive status determined by ELISA, and any level of CD4 count. Previous treatment with pharmaceutical preparations was an exclusion criterion. A modified National Institutes of Health - USA protocol was basis of study design and execution. Supervised medication administration, counseling and meals were provided. Standard laboratory studies, CD4 counts and viral loads were determined at admission, with monthly CD4 counts (Institute Pasteur, Dakar) and viral loads (HIV-1 RNA by PCR verified by HIV-1 RNA Ultra MTD–Lab Corp USA). Admission history and weekly physical examinations provided serial determinations of opportunistic infections and symptoms. Photographic records were made of serial dermatosis improvement. Patients were monitored for fungal and bacterial infections, dermatosis, weight, fever, diarrhea, and depression.

**Results:** METRAFAIDS produced significant clinical and laboratory results. Admission viral load range was 496 to 750,000 copies/ml. Over half of the patient population (54%) had a viral load decrease greater than 66%. Forty four patients (71%) increased CD4 counts >70% during therapy. Final CD4 range was 81-1353 with 38 patients >400, 28 patients >500, and 13 patients >800.

METRAFAIDS reduced opportunistic infections, dermatosis, weight, and clinical symptoms in >85% of the patients. There were no documented adverse reactions throughout the study.

**Conclusions:** METRAFAIDS is an effective herbal combination and has been trade marked and patented by PROMETRA through the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI). The benefits of this traditional herbal medication are great, recognizing its efficacy, accessibility, low cost and non-existent side effects. In Africa where antiretroviral medications are routinely inaccessible, this herbal preparation will open a treatment option for large numbers of the HIV infected population. Approximately 85% of the residents of sub-Saharan Africa obtain their health education and health care from traditional medicine practitioners. These results clearly show the benefit of an African traditional medicine preparation (METRAFAIDS) in the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

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