USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO IMPROVE FOLLOW-UP AND ROUTINE CHECKS ON NEWLY DIAGNOSED YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND THEIR ADHERENCE TO ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY IN NIGERIA

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Background:
This rising incidence amongst young people has been attributed to stigma, cultural barriers, and unfriendly approach of health workers to HIV positive young people.
These have impeded access to HIV services and care, including testing, commencing treatment and counselling. As much as 60,000 people who tested positive to HIV in Lagos state, Nigeria did not return for treatment largely due to stigmatization and discrimination. Therefore, we assessed the use of social media as a tool for improving follow up of HIV patients since it reduces frequent physical contact with health workers.

Methods:
HIV Testing Services were conducted for young people between the ages of 18-35 years in Ifako Ijaiye, Lagos State through mobile outreach. A total of ninety-one subjects (60 female and 31 male) agreed to participate and were tested. Seven (7.78%; 5 female and 2 male) tested positive for HIV. They were counselled on the need to commence ART and were added to an existing WhatsApp Group for follow up and to schedule routine checks.

Results:
Using social media for follow up and routine checks seems to be effective, the platform makes it easier to reduce physical contact with health workers thus reducing the incidence of discrimination and stigmatization while providing routine counseling. Social media also helped to improve positive interaction amongst the clients as they found it easy to interact and share information about their health condition and experiences.

Conclusion:
This can be used to influence young people to access information on HIV and other important aspects of healthcare including sexual and reproductive health. This could improve access to care and reducing the rising incidence of the disease amongst young people.
This could also have positive influence on their mental health. The platform will curb discrimination and stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:
Nothing to disclose.