

Equipping Caregivers to Respond to HIV/AIDS

Tanzania

In a tidy home in Arusha, Tanzania, a Maasai nurse is counting out pills for Jamila, a 48-year-old woman who is HIV positive. The medicine will alleviate Jamila's leg pain, a side effect of her anti-retroviral medicines (ARVs).



About 3 million Tanzanians are HIV positive. Over 60 percent of them are women. Even with ARVs, sustaining patients is a delicate business. Encouraged by international funders, hospice or "palliative care"—focused on keeping patients comfortable, as opposed to "curative care"—is becoming more common.

Jamila's caregivers are based at Selian Hospital, one of 20 hospitals operated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). By bringing together a nurse, a social worker, a pastor, and a community volunteer for home visits, Selian teams are attending to the medical, social, and spiritual needs of 1,800 people and their families.

ELCA missionary Dr. Kristopher Hartwig helped Selian set up its Palliative Care program in 1999. Children of missionaries to Tanzania, he and his wife Rebecca have conducted their medical careers and raised their own children in both countries.

Now Kristopher is working to replicate the Selian Hospital program in all 20 ELCT hospitals, while advocating at the national level for such critical medicines as oral morphine to become accessible to the rural areas.

"By linking health services with church outreach, the ELCT is building a palliative care/hospice model that is rooted in Christ's love and has the tools to work effectively with people who are often spiritually desperate," said Kristopher.

For more Stories of Faith in Action, visit www.elca.org/stewardship/interpreting.html.



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