

# PRAYAS HEALTH GROUP



## ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

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*Dear friends,*

*We are pleased to present the annual report of Prayas Health Group (PHG) for the year 2019-20.*

*This report gives the details of our activities from April 2019 to March 2020.*

*We are grateful to our donors, funding agencies, friends and well-wishers for their continued support.*

*We are indebted to our patients, participants in our programs and research projects for keeping on motivating us to continue our work.*

*Dr. Sanjeevani Kulkarni*

*Coordinator, Prayas Health Group*

*Dr. Vinay Kulkarni*

*Coordinator, Prayas Health Group*

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## SERVICES PROVIDED AT PRAYAS

1. HIV Care at Prayas Amrita Clinic
2. Affordable Anti-retroviral Therapy for Adults [Sakav Program]
3. Free HIV care and ART for Children [Child Care Program]
4. Prayas Counseling Center
5. Prayas Health Laboratory
6. Cervical Cancer Prevention and Screening

## HIV Care at Prayas Amrita Clinic



HIV care is being provided at Amrita Clinic (AC) since 1989. AC was one of the first centers which started providing clinical care to people living with HIV(PLHIV). It was started by Dr. Vinay Kulkarni. In 2006, AC was merged with Prayas Health Group and it became one of the activities of Prayas Health Group (PHG) and continues to provide treatment and care to PLHIV.

Till March 2020, a total 8522 patients have been registered at AC. Out of these 7870 were adults and 652 were children. Of these 5604 were ever started on ART of which 5172 were adults and 432 were children.

Table 1: Current Status of patients ever started on ART at Amrita Clinic till March 2020

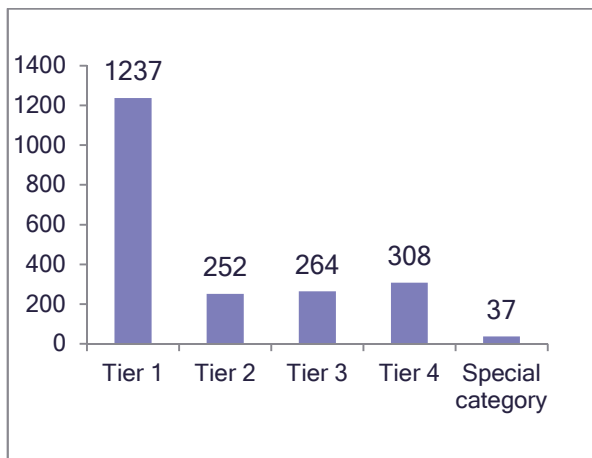
Parameter	Total number
Total number of PLHIV ever started on ART in AC	5604
Adults transferred to government free ART centers for continuation of ART.	901
Patients reported to be expired.	510
Patients lost to follow up	2095
Currently taking ART from the Sakav program	2098

In this year there were total 2205 PLHIV continued their follow up at AC. Of these 1177 were men, 976 were women and 52 were children. During this year, 167 PLHIV were newly registered at AC which included 90 men, 72 women and 5 children.

## Affordable Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) [Sakav Program]

To provide the ART at an affordable cost, Prayas initiated the Sakav program in 2006. Sakav is a self-sustaining program under which every patient receives medicines at rates much lower than in the market. Surplus from the affording patients is used to offset costs for those with very low incomes.

The tier wise distribution of people who are currently on ART (N=2098) is given in the graph. These tiers are decided based upon the economic status (paying capacity) of the patient.



Tier one patients pay the maximum amount (which is still highly subsidized as compared to the treatment in other private clinics) and tier 4 the minimum. There is also a special category in which two of the combinations of ART which are not covered under Sakav program are provided at subsidized cost to patients from very low socio-economic status.

## Free HIV care and ART for Children [Child Care Program]

This project supports treatment for children whose parents cannot afford treatment. The medicines and investigations are provided completely free or with partial support from Prayas. The consultation fees for these children are waived. Such support is provided till the children enter adulthood i.e. till they become 18 years of age. We spend around Rs. 2.5-3 lakhs per year on ART medicines for these children. The resources are generated through individual donations from well-wishers. The following table gives details of the children enrolled in this project.

Table 2: Details of the children enrolled in the Child Care project.

Concession	Number of children (N=34)
100% concession	13
50% concession	10
Need based concession	11

## Prayas Counseling Center



Addressing the psychological needs of HIV-infected individuals is an integral part of comprehensive care. Prayas through its counseling center has been providing psychological support to HIV infected and affected individuals. The counseling services are provided free of cost. Started in 1998 the services of counseling center are being continued through trained and dedicated counselors. Prayas has also developed reader friendly educational material addressing various issues of HIV care, which is also used to support counseling.

Prayas counseling center provides counseling regarding

- Pre and post HIV test counseling
- HIV care counseling
- Sexual and reproductive health related issues
- Prevention of mother to child transmission
- Disclosure to child living with HIV
- Growing up concerns of adolescents living with HIV
- Parenting issues among PLHIV
- Marriage among PLHIV
- Allaying anxiety about Covid-19 co-infection

To address the psycho-social needs of community during Covid-19 pandemic, PHG decided to start a helpline for answering queries and concerns about Covid-19. The existing staff of Prayas health group including counsellors and doctors were being trained online for this purpose.



## Prayas Health Laboratory

The PRAYAS Health laboratory was established in 2007, with the purpose to provide



diagnostic and prognostic tests required for the management of HIV at subsidized rates. The tests available are Rapid HIV antibody detection test, routine hemogram, biochemistry tests, urine analysis, and serological tests for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and VDRL, CD4/CD8 counts, and viral load. HIV DNA PCR test & genotyping test for drug

resistance are done at another commercial laboratory at a special concessional rate for PRAYAS. Histopathology reporting of FNAC & biopsy samples from the 'Cervical Cancer Screening and Prevention' project is done in the laboratory.

Table 3: Number of tests done in Laboratory from April 2019 to March 2020.

Tests	Prayas Amrita Clinic	Tests done through other projects/samples from other places	Total
Anti HIV	466	23	489
CD4	2297	64	2361
HIV Viral Load	2027	64	2091
Routine ART monitoring test	2122	107	2229
HBsAg	450	23	473
HCV	466	23	489
VDRL	477	---	477
HIV DNA PCR	75	---	75
Abacavir Sensitivity test	32	---	32
Drug resistance(PI+RT)	12	---	12
Drug resistance(RT)	35	---	35
Urine Analysis	190	107	297
Lipid Profile	508	107	615

## Cervical Cancer Prevention and Screening

### Cervical cancer prevention services at Prayas



At Prayas, we provide affordable services for cervical cancer screening and initial management. These include, colposcopy, biopsy, appropriate treatment of cervical cancer precursor lesions [ablative treatment using cold coagulation and excisional treatment using Loop Electro-Excision Procedure (LEEP)], and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination. Since Apr 2019 to March 2020, 267 women visited our clinic and of these, 217 underwent

colposcopies, 62 had cervix biopsies and 163 women were treated (22 women underwent LEEP and 141 received ablative treatment). In addition, 35 girls received the HPV vaccine at our clinic. Funding for above services was provided by Cipla Foundation till July 2019 and since then these services are being supported by institutional funds.

### Cervical cancer screening services in the community for women from the low and middle-income strata.



Live Life Love Life Charity Foundation has been facilitating a grant to Prayas since October 2016 by BMC Software India Pvt Ltd through their CSR initiative for the community based cervical cancer prevention programme. BMC Software India Private Limited, through their CSR initiative, has supported Prayas to conduct cervical cancer screening camps in Pune city to increase awareness and to provide free cervical cancer screening to women from the low socio-economic group.

BMC Software has also donated a mobile clinic van which is used as an onsite screening facility with provision for appropriate treatment in the community setting. Between April 2019 and March 2020, we have conducted **125** cervical cancer screening camps in the community and screened total **4997** women of whom 3.9% women (199/4997) women have been treated following the WHO guidelines.

# INTERVENTION PROJECTS

1. Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV(PMTCT)Project  
(Funded by the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM in collaboration with MSACS)
2. Youth and Resilience, Empowerment and Edutainment (YaREE) Project  
(Funded by Keep a Child Alive (KCA))
3. Free mobile voice call service for improvement of maternal and child health indicators (mMitra Project)  
(Funded by ARMAAN, Mumbai)
4. Techno-peer intervention for improving sexual self-efficacy among the adolescents and youth of Pune District, Maharashtra (Techno-peer Project)  
(Funded by ViiV Healthcare's Positive Action Program)
5. NESTS for Youth: Non-judgmental, Empowering, Self-reflective and Technology-assisted Spaces (NESTS) for youth to improve their health and access to care and support services  
(Funded by Bristlecone, India)

## Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV

From 2002 to September 2019, the project provided PMTCT cascade services to 13,64,928 pregnant and lactating women accessing care in the public-private health sector. Since 2012 in collaboration with Maharashtra State AIDS Control Society, PHG scaled up PMTCT services in the private sector of six high prevalence districts (Ahmednagar, Satara, Sangli, Solapur, Pune and Kolhapur) from the state of Maharashtra through Public Private Partnership (PPP). Till 2017 the program was exclusively implemented in the private health sector.

### **Svetana - PMTCT project**

Project Svetana, a National Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative started in 2015 to scale-up Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis services in the private sector of 14 states supported by Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM). The goal of the project is to achieve 'Elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV and Syphilis' in the country. Prayas implemented the Svetana project in the above mentioned 6 districts. In 2018, the project started supporting the public sector as well. During the implementation period, total 2500 facilities were associated with the program as PPP and referral facilities. Since the inception of the project we have been able to serve 3,225 pregnant women living with HIV for PMTCT.

In June 2019, based on the recommendation received from Global Funds (GFATM) ('One State One Implementation Partner') for Svetana PMTCT Program, Prayas handed over this program to SAATHII PI, PMTCT NGO Maharashtra unit.

Though the project has stopped its implementation in the state, PMTCT services to women coming to Amrita Clinic will continue.

Table 4. Program data of Svetana - PMTCT project (April 2019- September 2019)

Parameters	Public	Private	Total
Number of women provided pretest and ANC counseling	190882	119812	310694
Number of pregnant women tested for HIV	190882	119812	310694
Number of pregnant women living with HIV enrolled in the project	185	78	263
Number of women living with HIV delivered	133	76	209
CD4 count uptake	182	77	259
Maternal ARV uptake	182	77	259
Infant ARV uptake in the Program	127	75	202
Babies tested for HIV by DNA PCR at 2 months of age	112	70	182
Babies reactive for HIV at 2 months of age	1	1	2



Experience sharing Meeting of Private Health Care Providers on EMTCT of HIV and Syphilis



District Level Sensitization of Public Health Sector on EMTCT of HIV and Syphilis



Best NGO order for Work in PPTCT

## Youth and Resilience, Empowerment and Edutainment (YaREE) Project

The project is funded by the 'Keep a Child Alive' Foundation. Since 2010, Prayas has been conducting workshops for adolescents and youth living with HIV. These are residential workshops conducted on consecutive four days. KCA came in the picture in 2013. During the initial years these workshops were conducted in Pune city. Now we conduct workshops at district level so that beneficiaries across the state can participate in it. Since 2019, the project was named as YaREE project. It is being implemented in 7 districts of Maharashtra. The aim of the project is to reach upto as many adolescents and young adults as possible and try to increase their agency and knowledge regarding HIV, sexuality, and relationships. To increase their resilience is our focus. The workshops are specifically designed to achieve this. We have seen in last more than 10 years that this intervention helps the participants to cope with the stressors arising due to growing up and also due to living with HIV, this translates into increase in ART adherence, improvement in their overall performance in executing the life skills.

To reach as many as adolescent and youth living with HIV (A/YLHIV) we get support from various district level organizations as well as networks working for HIV and youth groups. In 2019, we conducted 11 workshops at Ahmednagar, Kolhapur, Solapur, Pune, Thane and Sangli. In 2020, we are planning to conduct total 12 workshops in other districts from the state.

### Outreach Activities for year 2019-2020

Table 5. Meetings/Efforts to reach out to A and Y(LHIV)

Meetings/Efforts	Number
Meetings with District AIDS Prevention Control Unit	9
NGOs and ART centers approached	42
Meetings conducted with NGO's/positive people networks working at district	56
Sensitization of counsellors, MO and other stakeholders	132

Table 6. YaREE workshops organized (March 2019- April 2020)

District	Total number of workshops conducted	Period of Workshop	Total Number of A/YLHIV contracted	Total number of A/YLHIV participated in the workshop
Ahmednagar	2	16 to 21 April 2019 4 to 7 July 2019	80	40
Kolhapur	2	27 to 30 April 2019 1 to 4 May 2019	95	47
Pune	2	21 to 24 March 2019 22 to 25 May 2019	69	46
Sangli	2	4 to 6 August 2019 30 October to 2 November 2019	80	24
Satara	1	2 to 6 October 2019	45	17
Solapur	1	28 to 31 May 2019	52	26
Thane	1	11 to 14 December 2019	65	32
Osmanabad	1	February 2020		23
Total	12		486	255

#### Capacity building of peers and facilitators:

Some adolescents expressed their interest to participate in the future workshops as peer facilitators. Five-day residential workshop was conducted for these peer facilitators. Total 18 participants from the different districts of Maharashtra attended this workshop. First two days of technical training consisted of building capacities of the participants on logistical arrangements to be done pre/post and during the workshops. This includes preparations, communication, responsibilities to be taken during the workshops, etc. As different tools such as music, singing, drawing, skits, etc. are used during the YaREE workshop, the last three days the facilitators were trained in using these tools.

**Involvement of peer facilitators in workshops:**

After the above said workshop two peer facilitators from a nearby geographic area where the workshop was planned participated in YaREE workshops. They were involved in all the activities such as group sessions, workshop activities, group songs. They encouraged other participants to take part in the discussions taking place in the workshop.

**Virtual community:**

With the objective of staying connected with all participants of YaREE workshops a virtual community platform was formed. The objective was to answer their queries if any and to keep them updated with new information. 'WhatsApp groups' of the participants were formed with prior consent. The platform helped them in continuing dialogue among themselves and also getting information about importance of ART adherence, regular checkup for CD4, viral load etc. Nonetheless it also gave them an opportunity to get scientific information about the emerging issues such as Covid 19.

**Selection of peers from support group for fellowship:**

Many of our peer support group members participated in various activities at state, national and international levels. Some of them are regularly participating in state level youth forums. The objective of such forums is to mobilize and empower youth living with HIV from the state. During the year, four peers attended a national level workshop organized by the National AIDS Control Organization. Two members have received fellowship from Treat Asia initiative. This fellowship offers two-years scholarship for empowering adolescents and youth with proper knowledge. A peer participated in a workshop for young advocates working in the field of HIV in South Africa in September 2019.



## mMITRA Project

mMitra is a free mobile voice call service that provides timed and culturally appropriate comprehensive information on preventive care and simple intervention to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity in urban areas.

Prayas is implementing mMitra (mobile mitra) project in Pune city since May 2016, the project is supported by ARMAAN, Mumbai based organization.

Through this project, pregnant and lactating women receive messages on antenatal and postnatal care. Medically verified, individualized voice messages of 60 – 90 seconds (145 messages in all) in Hindi or Marathi are sent to pregnant and lactating women. The enrollment of eligible women in the program is carried out by a trained ‘Sakhi’, identified by the organization. The intent of implementing the mMitra program is to communicate and engage with pregnant women and women with children less than one year of age on preventative care measures and about simple interventions to reduce maternal and infant mortality and morbidity.

We are working with Municipal corporation facilities and private/trust-based hospitals from Pune city catering services to urban poor women. Currently mMitra services are offered through 6 private and 16 PMC hospitals. We are reaching approximately 2000 women every month through 27 Sakhis working on the project. Since the inception of the project 71,704 women received comprehensive antenatal and postnatal care counseling services through using mobile technology.

During the year we have conducted 4 quarterly meetings of Sakhis. These meetings are organized to understand about the challenges faced by Sakhi at different sites, to refresh their knowledge and provide appropriate feedback based on gaps in their performance.

Table 7. mMitra project enrollment in the year April 2019 to March 2020

<b>Private and Public sector</b>	<b>Number of facilities</b>	<b>Number of women enrolled in the project</b>
<b>Private (Trust) hospitals</b>	6	5200
<b>Pune Municipal corporation</b>	16	10658
<b>Total</b>	22	15858

## Techno-peer Project

The overall aim of Techno-peer intervention is to improve sexual self-efficacy of adolescents and youth (15-24) to protect and promote their sexual health. Techno-peer project was commissioned for April 2018 to March 2020. In the last year as a part of this project 8 short films on different topics of sexuality were developed and more than 40 discussion sessions with adolescents and young adults were conducted by using these videos with the help of other community organizations and educational institutes. Collectively, this project has reached more than 1300 young adults in the age group of 15 to 30 from Pune district; both urban and rural population.



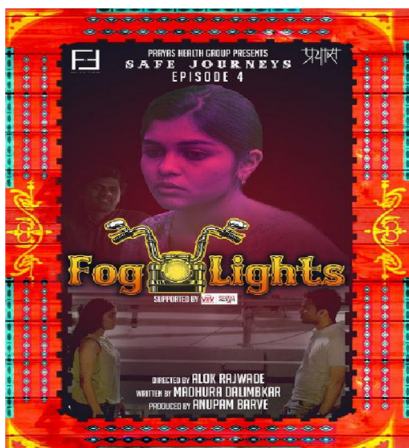
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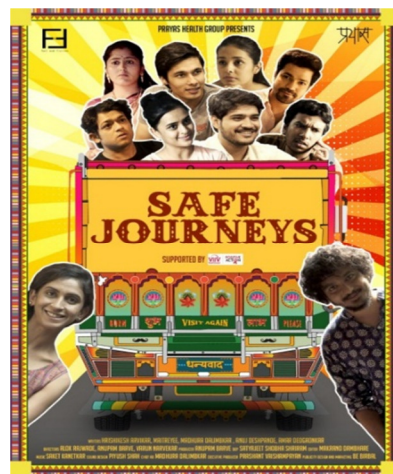
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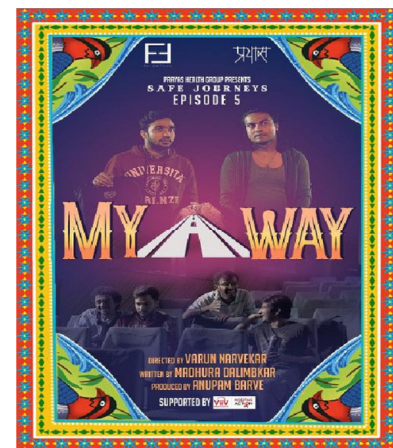
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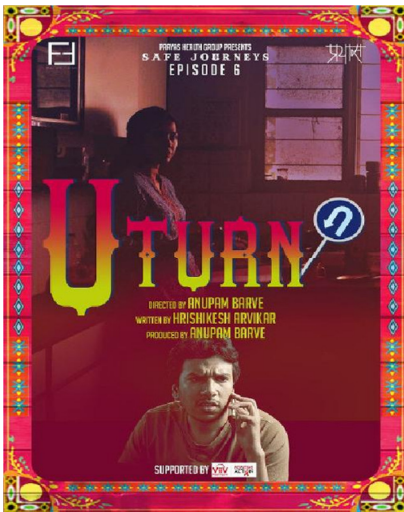
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMKroKsQ2s8>



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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLIIKX\\_r4f8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLIIKX_r4f8).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1gi-TtbFCY>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOJbgAJ5MBM>

These videos were released as web-series named 'safe journeys' on social media channels of Prayas Health Group and they have reached more than 3.5 lakh views.

One of the objectives of this project was to sensitize young volunteers on sexuality & sexual health, and also to train them to facilitate discussions with different youth groups using developed videos. A three-day residential workshop was organized by PHG for 15 peer volunteers, from 18th October to 20th October, 2019. This workshop was conducted in AFARM Training Centre, Shivapur. Various methods like expert sessions, group discussions, role plays, card games etc. were used to sensitize peer volunteers on different topics like HIV and other STIs, unintended pregnancy and contraception, safe sex practices, child sexual abuse, consent, communication in relationships, basics of anatomy and physiology of human beings, positive body image and mental health in this residential workshop.



As a part of this project, we tried to connect with many community organizations. When we were approaching and discussing the different possibilities to reach more and younger adults with all these organizations, the one thing which came up prominently was standardizing and collaborating all the efforts about sexuality education happening in and around India, primarily Maharashtra. Hence, we planned a state level one day conference to collate the different efforts made by various community organizations and experience sharing of many experts working in this field for more than 20 years through panel discussions and their presentations. This conference was planned on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we had postponed the conference. The invitations of this conference were for the various community organizations who are already working in the field of Sexual and Reproductive rights and also to the individuals who work in the domain. The response for participating in this conference was very encouraging; and it also underlines the need to provide a platform where volunteers/educators can learn, discuss and share their insights to take comprehensive sexuality education forward. There were a total 120 participants who registered for this conference and there were many more, to whom because of constraints of the hall we couldn't accommodate. We intend to organize this conference once the pandemic gets over.

## Special Recognition for few films

Films we developed got several special recognitions and awards in different film festivals.

1. Film - **Kab Kab Jab Jab** got the 1st prize in the category of short film by the Public health department, state of Maharashtra in 1st Maha-ArogyaFilm



Festival. In the same Film Festival 4 of the films from the web series- **Fog Lights**, **Dekho Magar**, **My Way** and **U Turn** got selected for the official screening.

2. Film – **Fog Lights** got 2nd prize in the 9th International Arogya Film Festival which hosts films made in the domain of public health.



In the same film festival, another film **Dekho Magar** also got selected for official screening.

3. Film - **Not My Fault** was selected by Maharashtra State Women Commission as one of the most influential short-films on women empowerment.

## Nestor Project

### **NESTS (Non-judgmental, Empowering, Self-reflective, Technology assisted Spaces) for Youth**

Based on the insights from 'Youth in Transition' research conducted by PHG, NESTS for Youth: Non-judgmental, Empowering, Self-reflective and Technology-assisted Spaces (NESTS) was conceptualized to improve health and access to care and support services for youth. The project was initiated on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 with the support of CSR initiative of Bristlecone India Ltd. The overall objective of the project is to improve the health of young adults, specifically sexual health and other mental & physical health issues linked with sexuality.

NESTS are free and confidential counselling and listening spaces for youth to speak about any of their concerns such as risk perception regarding HIV/STIs, child sexual abuse, intimate partner abuse, self-image, gender identity, sexual orientation, loneliness, break ups, depression, anxiety, self harm, feeling suicidal to whatever is bothering them in their lives. These spaces are required to reduce stigma related to mental & sexual health care needs, to reach at-risk youth and strengthen linkages to care and support services. Person providing counselling is referred to as a Nestor (a trustworthy person).

Nestors are provided with continued training and support in the form of regular case discussions and training from experts. Dr. Shirisha Sathe, a renowned counsellor and teacher had conducted training of Nestors to build their counselling skills and capacities. Additionally, Nestors undertook a certificate course in Sexual health counselling offered by a Delhi based renowned organization, TARSHI. Currently we are in the process of developing a comprehensive training module and a training program for future Nestors and other counselors to have a holistic understanding of sexual health.

Table 8. Nestor Project Enrollment in the year April 2019 to March 2020

	<b>Sessions Done</b>
Total Sessions from August 2019 to May 2020	232
Total Sessions of Male Participants	133
Total Sessions of Female Participants	83
Total Sessions of Trans and non-gender conforming participants	14
Total Joint sessions	2

## ONGOING RESEARCH

1. Dolutegravir Phase IV clinical trial
2. Cervical cancer prevention among HIV infected women
3. Breast cancer screening
4. Youth in Transition research study

## Dolutegravir Phase IV Trial

**Title:** Multicenter, non-randomized, non-controlled, open-label Phase IV trial to evaluate the safety, tolerability and effectiveness of Dolutegravir 50 mg tablet of Emcure Pharmaceuticals along with other antiretroviral among HIV-1 infected

**Site Principal investigator:** Dr. Vinay Kulkarni

This study is sponsored by Emcure Pharmaceutical Limited and National AIDS Research Institute is conducting this study through 10 sites all over India. PHG is one of the sites for this study. This is an open label phase IV study. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the safety and to assess the effectiveness of dolutegravir in causing HIV-1 suppression in combination with other ARVs in HIV-1 infected subjects. As per Drug Controller General of India recommendation, total 250 HIV 1 positive adult participants will be enrolled in the study. In PHG screening started from 16th July 2018. Till March 2020 total 39 participants were screened for eligibility and 38 participants were enrolled in the trial. Total 32 participants have completed their 6th (last) visit in the trial. One participant withdrew from the study before completion of all the scheduled visits in the study and one participant expired which was reported as a serious adverse event unrelated to the Investigational product.



## Cervical cancer prevention among HIV infected women

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Smita Joshi, Senior Scientist, Prayas

**Co-investigators:** Dr. Vinay Kulkarni, Director, Prayas, Dr. Richard Muwonge, IARC (WHO), Lyon, France

**Funding support:** Cipla Foundation supported the project from July 2016 to July 2019. The project is now being supported by institutional funds.

We have an ongoing research study in HIV-infected women since 2010. The study was supported by Union for International cancer control in Geneva for the cross-sectional component. After the funding support was completed, we have sustained a large cohort of 1153 HIV-infected women with the help of several donors over the last 9 years. This cohort addresses important research questions for cervical cancer prevention in HIV-infected women and we have so far published 3 papers in indexed, international scientific journals and one paper in indexed, national scientific journal.

## Breast cancer screening project

**Title of the research proposal:** A pilot study for breast cancer screening by clinical breast examination (CBE) and iBreastExam (iBE) for early detection of breast cancer

Primary objective is to evaluate the agreement between CBE and iBreastExam in the detection of breast lumps when performed by a trained health care provider. Secondary objectives of the project are to study the test performance of CBE and iBreastExam in detecting lumps with histopathology as the reference standard and to study the detection rate, false positive and false negative rates and positive predictive value of iBreastExam and CBE in detecting breast cancers as confirmed by histopathology

**Funding support:** Atlas Copco Charitable Foundation

We initiated our work in breast cancer screening in April 2019. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in India. Mammography screening is the mainstay of breast cancer screening in the developed/high-income countries however such organized screening programmes are extremely difficult/ expensive to implement in the low and middle-income countries. Hence alternative screening strategies must be evaluated. iBreastExam is a new technology that is approved by the USFDA and is approved in India. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), screening programmes should be undertaken only when their effectiveness has been demonstrated, when resources are sufficient to cover nearly all of the target group, when facilities exist for follow-up of those with abnormal results to confirm diagnoses and ensure treatment and when prevalence of the disease is high enough to justify the effort and costs of screening. We have initiated a research study to evaluate the diagnostic performance characteristics of Clinical Breast Examination (CBE) and iBreastExam for the early detection of breast cancer. Previous studies have been conducted in hospital settings and among women visiting the hospital/ breast clinic.

The actual field work was initiated in January 2020 (due to the unforeseen delay by the company in providing us the new version of the iBreastExam instrument). From January 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, we conducted 21 breast cancer screening camps in and around Pune city and screened 504 women. Women who were screen positive have been investigated appropriately.

## Youth in Transition

**Title:** A life course study of trajectories of safer sex behaviors in young unmarried youth from urban area in Pune, Maharashtra.

**Principle Investigator:** Dr. Ritu Parchure and Dr. Shrinivas Darak

Prayas had undertaken a life course study among unmarried urban youth of 20 to 29 years age group to understand trajectories of sexual health risks and its interlinkages with other domains of life. This was the self-funded activity of Prayas Health Group. The study was conducted in two phases. In the first qualitative phase, we conducted 27 in-depth interviews of 13 boys and 14 girls and 14 in-depth interviews of health care providers to understand their perspective about sexual health needs of this group. Based on the results of the first phase, the methodology and tools for the second phase of the research were refined. The enrollment for second phase started in July 2017 and completed in Dec 2018. Total 1240 youth (655 boys and 585 girls) were enrolled in this study. We conducted one-time one to one conversational interview with participants, using event history calendar and structured questionnaire. Currently we are in the process of analyzing the data collected through these interviews and writing the research briefs and manuscripts.

We disseminated the results of this research study in different forms for different stakeholders. An article series of 8 articles was written titled, '**Natesambandh ani Laingikta**' on an online newsletter '**The Wire Marathi**' on relationship and sexuality related issues.

1. 'सिरीयस', 'कॅज्युअल' आणि जातीची जाणीव - द वायर मराठी

<https://m.marathi.thewire.in/article/serious-cajual-jatichi-janiv/5116>

2. नाती, नात्यांच्या कल्पना आणि अदृश्य दबाव - द वायर मराठी

<https://m.marathi.thewire.in/article/nati-natyanchya-kalpana-aani-adrushya-dabav/4985>

3. युवकांना स्थित्यंतरात समजून घेण्याचा 'प्रयास' - द वायर मराठी

<https://marathi.thewire.in/yuvkanna-stityantar-at-samjun-ghenyacha-prayas>

4. लैंगिक अत्याचार आणि आपण सर्व - द वायर मराठी

<https://marathi.thewire.in/laingik-atyachar-aaniaapan-sarva>

5. लैंगिक अत्याचाराचा लपलेला चेहरा - द वायर मराठी

<https://marathi.thewire.in/laingik-atyacharacha-laplela-chehara>

6. लैंगिकता आणि नैराश्य - द वायर मराठी

<https://m.marathi.thewire.in/article/laingikta-aani-nairashya/5647>

7. संमतीची जाणीव -नेणीव - द वायर मराठी

<https://marathi.thewire.in/sanmatichi-janiv-neniv>

8. सेक्स आणि इज्जत का सवाल - !द वायर मराठी

<https://m.marathi.thewire.in/article/sex-aaniiijat-ka-sawal/5302?utm=infinitescroll>

9. सेक्स आणि जोखमीचे जोखड - द वायर मराठी

<https://marathi.thewire.in/sex-and-burden-of-risk>

The web series, '**Safe Journey**' of 8 short films of 8 to 10 minutes each on different issues related to sexuality, referred to earlier was developed based on the insights from the YIT research study.

On 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2020, on occasion of Youth day Mumbai District AIDS Control Society (MDACS) and PHG jointly conducted a meeting in Mumbai with the representatives of different organizations working on youth, HIV and sexual reproductive health. The agenda was to understand emerging health needs (HIV and sexual health) of urban youth and deliberate upon the innovative ways to address the needs. PHG disseminated the findings of this research study during this meeting.

A need for a safe and non-judgmental space to talk about sexuality related issues was expressed by almost all the participants. During the interview, they could speak about things which they had never shared with anyone, especially about child sexual abuse related experiences. In response to this we started a project NESTS (Non-judgmental, Empowering, Self-reflective, Technology assisted Spaces) for Youth which are free and confidential counselling and listening spaces for youth to speak about any of their concerns related to sexuality.

# WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS CONDUCTED

## A) Training and Awareness

Over the years Prayas has developed its expertise and conducted various training programs for health care professionals as well as the communities. Presentations, pictures, games, group discussions, role-plays, quiz are some of the techniques used while conducting training. These programs are innovative and participatory in nature. PHG has also conducted training programs for teachers to encourage a safe environment in the schools, for adolescents and young adults living with HIV to address their concerns regarding growing up and for health care providers about management of HIV.

## B) Training of doctors for Cervical cancer screening

PHG conducted about 5 lectures regarding cervical cancer screening for the doctors from Pune, Solapur, Satara at the Health and Family Welfare Department, Aundh, Pune who are undergoing training for Population based screening. About 20-25 doctors were present at each session.



## C) Presentation during a dissemination meeting held by Gujarat States AIDS Control Society, Ahmedabad, 10th December 2020.

The UNAIDS through the United Nations Joint Teams on AIDS (UNJTA) identified the state of Gujarat for support under the Unified Budgets, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF) project. On the occasion of the dissemination of the project learnings, Dr Shrinivas Darak was invited to talk on SRHR, HIV and Youth and present the findings of the Youth in Transition study conducted by Prayas.

## WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS ATTENDED BY GROUP MEMBERS

1) Dr. Ritu Parchure and Dr. Shrinivas Darak attended a workshop on 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019 on '**Exploring Stove Use Monitoring (AWESUM)**', hosted by KEM hospital research center, Pune. The workshop focused on the latest Stove Use Monitors (SUMs) to measure indoor air pollution, SUMs hardware and software technology, including the operation of sensors, deployment on different appliances, and subsequent data analysis techniques.

2) Dr. Shrinivas Darak attended a national conference on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019 titled '**Online interests, offline consequences: Navigating complex sexualities in digital contexts**' which was organized by KEM Hospital Research Center, Pune, Don't offend India, and Charite University, Berlin, Germany. The conference was followed by a workshop on prevention of child sexual abuse material offending

3) Maitreyee Kulkarni attended a workshop on '**Counselling Skills Training**' organized by TARSHI, New Delhi from 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at Delhi.

4) On 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 for capacity building of the group members workshop on '**Lateral Thinking**' was conducted by Parimal Choudhari (PRAJ Industries) at ARkey Hall, Pune. This was a half day workshop. Sixteen members of Prayas Health Group attended this workshop.

5) Dr. Vinay Kulkarni attended '**State level conference of Indian Association of Dermatologists (CUTICON)**' conference at Kolhapur on 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> November 2019. He delivered the talk on a) **Resurgence of STD's** b) **Management of Atypical Mycobacteriosis**. He also participated in a debate on '**Do all cases of erythema nodosum need ATT?**'

6) Dr. Ritu Parchure and Dr. Trupti Darak attended the **12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of AIDS Society of India- ASICON 2019**, on 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2019 at Chennai.

Dr. Ritu Parchure presented a poster titled, '**Increasing sero-discordancy among young HIV infected pregnant women from India: A likely pointer of changing transmission dynamics**' and this poster received **1<sup>st</sup> prize**.

Dr. Trupti Darak presented a poster titled, '**Acceptability of self-testing for HIV among unmarried young people from India**'.

7) Dr Shrinivas Darak attended the **20th Anniversary meeting of the Population Research Center (PRC), University of Groningen, The Netherlands** on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019. This meeting was held on the occasion of 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of PRC in Groningen.

8) Dr. Shrinivas Darak attended a workshop on **Investing in Adolescent Health: Harnessing the Demographic Dividend on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2019** in New Delhi. It was organized by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare & Observer Research Foundation.

9) Dr. Vinay Kulkarni attended the **National Consultation on PrEP** on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at Delhi.

10) Dr. Vinay Kulkarni attended the **National conference of Indian Association of Dermatologists (Dermacon)** on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 held at Pune. He was invited for Panel discussion on '**Current situation of STIs and HIV**'.

11) Dr. Vinay Kulkarni attended a meeting of Kolhapur dermatology association on 14 Feb 2020 at Kolhapur. He presented on '**Management of Psoriasis at Kolhapur**'.

12) Dr. Vinay Kulkarni attended Dnyan Prabodhini's 50 years Celebration program on 19th February 2020 and gave a speech on '**Sexual and reproductive health of Youth**'.

13) Dr. Vinay Kulkarni, Dr. Shrinivas Darak and Dr.Ritu Parchure attended the annual HIV conference organized by Asha Kirana foundation '**HIV/AIDS update 2020**' on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020 in Mysore as faculty. Prayas research was presented in the conference. In addition to oral presentation, Dr. Vinay Kulkarni also participated in panel discussion and debate.

14) Nitish Narkhedkar attended **State Level Youth Conference (Yuva Hakka Parishad) Pune**, on 23-25 January 2020 conference organized by MASUM NGO at Pune.

# PUBLICATIONS

## Publications in peer reviewed journals

- **Types of Variables, Descriptive Statistics, and Sample Size; Feroze Kaliyadan, Vinay Kulkarni;** Indian Dermatology Online Journal; 2019; Volume 10; Issue number 1
- **The use of emergency contraceptive pills in India: A meta-analysis; Nikisha Mehta, Shrinivas Darak, Ritu Parchure;** Indian Journal of Public Health; 2020; Volume 64; Issue number 2; Page 178-185

## Published Reports

- **The Use of Emergency Contraceptive Pills in India: A Systematic Review;** Ritu Parchure, Nikisha Mehta, Shrinivas Darak

## Published Abstracts

- **Acceptability of Self-Testing for HIV among Unmarried Young People from India;** T. Darak R. Parchure, S. Darak, A Kulkarni, V. Kulkarni, Youth In Transition Study; 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of AIDS Society of India- ASICON 2019
- **Increasing Sero-discordancy among Young HIV Infected Pregnant Women from India: A Likely Pointer of Changing Transmission Dynamics;** Ritu Parchure, Shrinivas Darak, Vijaya Jori, Asha Hegde, Anoop Kumar Puri, Vinay Kulkarni, Raman Gangakhedkar; 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of AIDS Society of India- ASICON 2019

## Published Articles

- Maitreyee Kulkarni wrote a series of total 8 articles on relationship and sexuality related issues titled, '**Natesambandh ani Laingikta**' on '**The Wire Marathi**' online newsletter. These articles were written based on the findings from the research study 'Youth in transition' conducted by Prayas Health group among youths to understand the relationship choices and health needs of the youth.

## IEC material published

Pamphlet on breast cancer in Marathi and English

		<p>The objective of developing the pamphlet was to create awareness about cancer screening.</p>
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## Prayas Internal Complaints Committee (IC)

The committee is for prevention of sexual harassment at work place. Prayas IC was formed in the year February 2014. Aim of this committee as per the Act published by Gazette of India, is regarding Sexual harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal).

Our committee includes following members:

1. Vijaya Jori, PHG representative and Chairperson
2. Preeti Karmarkar, External NGO representative
3. Adv. Vrishali Vaidya, Advocate, External member
4. Shweta Kulkarni, PEG representative
5. Abhiram Sahasrabuddhe, PEG representative
6. Aparna Joshi, Accounts and Trust office representative
7. Dr. Shrinivas Darak, PHG representative

In the year 2019-20 total 2 awareness workshops were conducted in Prayas (for Health and Energy group). The main objective of these workshops was for increasing awareness and understanding about gender and sexuality. In the workshop, information regarding the act (for prevention, prohibition and redressal for sexual harassment at work place), the internal complaints committee, and its mandate was also imparted.

There were seven new members joined in the group (PEG and PHG), information and awareness sessions conducted for all members at the time of joining during the induction training.

## REPRESENTATION ON COMMITTEES

1. Dr. Sanjeevani Kulkarni is a representative of ICC (Internal Complaint Committee) of National AIDS Research Institute (NARI), and National Institute of Virology (NIV).
2. Ms. Vijaya Jori - Global Community Advisory Board member (Community representative) since 2014 on Global Community Advisory Board, AIDS Clinical Trial Group (ACTG), Washington, USA,
3. Ms. Vijaya Jori Community Advisory Board member since 2008 on Clinical Trial Unit, B. J. Medical College, Pune
4. Dr. Vinay Kulkarni is in the consultancy services of Emcure Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and Mylan Pharmaceuticals to provide scientific advice not limited to development of new products /treatment regimens and ARV guidelines in the area of HIV/AIDS.
5. Dr. Shrinivas Darak is on the Doctoral advisory committees of PhD projects titled "An epidemiological study of gynecological problems among girls with cerebral palsy" by Dr. Arathi Rao and "An Investigation into the concept and assessment of well-being in Indian context: A mixed method approach" by Dr. Bhumika TV being carried out at the Manipal University, Manipal, India.
6. Dr. Shrinivas Darak is engaged as an adjunct faculty at the Public Health Evidence South Asia, Manipal University, Manipal.