

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Male partner involvement on initiation and sustainment of exclusive breastfeeding among HIV-infected post-partum women: Study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

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## Abstract

Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF) among human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-infected mothers is known to be associated with a sustained and significant reduction in HIV transmission and has the potential to reduce infant and under-five mortality. Research shows that EBF is not common in many HIV-endemic, resource-limited settings despite recommendations by the World Health Organization. Although evidence abounds that male partner involvement increases HIV testing and uptake and retention of prevention of mother-to-child transmission interventions, few studies have evaluated the impact of male partners' involvement and decision-making on initiation, maintenance, and sustainment of EBF. We propose a comparative effectiveness trial of Men's Club as intervention group compared to the control group on initiation and sustainment of EBF. Men's Club will provide male partners of HIV-infected pregnant women one 5-hr interactive educational intervention to increase knowledge on EBF and explore barriers and facilitators of EBF and support. Additionally, participating male partners in the Men's Club as intervention group will receive weekly text message reminders during the first 6-week post-natal period to improve initiation and sustainment of EBF. Participants in the Men's Club as control group will receive only educational pamphlets. Primary outcomes are the differences in the rates of initiation and sustainment of EBF at 6 months between the two groups. Secondary outcomes are differences in male partner knowledge of infant feeding options and the intent to support EBF in the two groups. Understanding the role and impact of male partners on the EBF decision-making process will inform the development of effective and sustainable evidence-based interventions to support the initiation and sustainment of EBF.

## KEYWORDS

breastfeeding, HIV, male involvement, Nigeria, randomized controlled trial, resource-limited setting

Abbreviations: EBF, Exclusive Breastfeeding; HBI, Healthy Beginning Initiative; HIV, Human Immunodeficiency Virus; iSTAR, Intervention for sustained testing and retention; MC-CG, Men's Club-Control Group; MC-IG, Men's Club-Intervention Group; NIH, National Institutes of Health; PMTCT, Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission; SSA, Sub-Saharan Africa.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

As of 2015, there were 36.7 million people living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) worldwide (UNAIDS, 2015). Young women were found to be at a disproportionately high risk of HIV infection,

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