

## **EFFECTS OF VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENTATION IN HIV-INFECTED PATIENTS: A REVIEW**

**Background:** Vitamin A deficiency is associated with a higher Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) viral load. Currently Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) is the main strategy that is used in suppressing viral load. However, prevalence of HIV positive patients with detectable viral load is high. Vitamin A has received significant attention as a therapeutic agent for the treatment of numerous immune compromised conditions. This is attributed to its ability to boost the immunity as a result of its antioxidant characteristics.

**Objective:** To establish if vitamin A supplementation could be used as a therapeutic micronutrient in the management of HIV.

**Study selection:** Based on defined key words a search was carried out on PUBMED to retrieve all publications on Vitamin A supplementation and HIV. 26 studies that met the search criteria were retrieved and the required data obtained.

**Data synthesis:** Six unique studies that met the study criteria were included. The publications were analysed to establish whether Vitamin A supplementation was effective in the management of HIV.

**Results:** The articles reviewed indicated that Vitamin A supplementation either led to improved immunity or its deficiency resulted to increased HIV viral load.

**Conclusion:** Vitamin A supplementation is an affordable and effective way to retard HIV progression by lowering the viral load and fighting opportunistic infections. Considering the high prevalence of detectable HIV viral load in this time and era of ART medication, Vitamin A supplementation should be given a significant consideration as a potential intervention strategy for suppressing HIV viral load along with the ART medication.

### **Key words**

HIV, Vitamin A, Supplementation

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