**Background**

Standard treatment guidelines (STGs) may contribute to the quality of HIV/AIDS treatment programs and facilitate antiretroviral (ART) product supply. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified 19 antiretroviral therapy (ART) regimens for adult patients in resource-limited settings and has prequalified ART products to facilitate country program procurement.

**Objective**

Management Sciences for Health’s Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus (RPM Plus) Program, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, compared ART recommendations for 15 countries supported by the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to determine the extent of agreement among the guidelines and consistency with current WHO ART guidelines. The identified most commonly listed ARVs, and determine potential for supply with internationally prequalified products.

**Method and Information Sources**

Draft or published guidelines were collected for Botswana, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Namibia, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Guidelines for Nigeria and Vietnam were not obtained.

**Results**

**Common Recommended Treatment Combinations**

- No treatment recommendation was common to all 15 countries.
- The 13 countries recommended up to 95 different first- and second-line treatment combinations for adults, ranging from 3 to 78 in any given country. Of the 90 recommended combinations were consistent with WHO guidelines (average, 53%).
- All but one country (Guyana) listed treatment recommendations not included in the WHO guidelines. 22–100% of individual country recommendations were consistent with WHO guidelines (average, 53%).
- Forty of the recommended treatment combinations were listed in only one country and were not consistent with current WHO recommendations.
- The four most commonly recommended treatment combinations included fixed antiretroviral agents:
  - Zidovudine/lamivudine/efavirenz
  - Zidovudine/lamivudine/nevirapine
  - Lamivudine/abacavir/efavirenz
  - Lamivudine/abacavir/nevirapine
- The least costly treatment combination is stavudine/lamivudine/nevirapine, with a WHO-prequalified fixed-dose combination product. Recommended by 11 countries as first-line treatment, the stavudine/lamivudine/nevirapine combination can be supplied with WHO-prequalified fixed-dose combination product.

**Discussion**

- The findings in this comparative analysis can be used to assess and guide multi-country and national planning for ART supply procurement and supply chain management, including product quality assurance; they can also be used to guide development and implementation of appropriate clinical and supply management training programs.
- Operations research is needed to assess the extent to which product availability, prescribing, and use are consistent with national ART guidelines, and to determine what actions will be needed to scale up existing programs.