



Prof Soraya Seedat, MBChB, MMed, FC Psych, PhD
Professor & Executive Head,
Department of Psychiatry, Stellenbosch.

Youth HIV and youth trauma are pervasive intersecting epidemics on the African continent. Histories of exposure to brutal traumatic events and consequent symptomatic posttraumatic stress, depression, alcohol and drug use disorders are common in youth with HIV in low- and middle- income settings.

Traumatic stress impacts on treatment adherence, risk reduction and general HIV care. In addition, the mental and physical health effects of trauma, and the resilience and coping strategies that are employed, differ between youth and adults in ways that influence HIV risk pathways.

Addressing the high rate and burden of HIV in youth - and in South African adolescent women who have a dual burden of HIV and sexual trauma - remains a national and global public health priority. Evidence-based models of trauma-informed care for youth living with HIV infection are crucial and warrant further research in low-resource settings.

The 9th Annual Child Trauma Conference provides a unique and very exciting opportunity to cast the spotlight on HIV infected and affected children and adolescents along with, strategies on treatment, prevention, and cost-effective ways to improve the quality of lives of the highly vulnerable.