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**AIDS ORPHANS-OPTIMISING CARE FOR HIV INFECTED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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A family care providing specialist paediatric and adult medical counselling services for families living with HIV was set up at a paediatric department in Amadora in 1998. During the first four years 232 families with 278 children was attended, including 25 infected children, 24 with HIV1 and one with HIV2, of whom five have died. Only 35% of mothers were born in Portugal, the others were originated in ten different countries, the majority in sub-Saharan Africa. Less than a quarter of children were cared for by both parents, 51% by mother alone and 10% by guardians or foster parents and there are 7% of orphans. A strategy of care should be shared with primary care, and pediatricians should become aware of local laws and community resources and initiate discussion early in the course of parental illness to facilitate planning for the future care and custody of the children.

