Access to comprehensive prevention of mother-to-child transmission program: obstacles and implications
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Preface

It was in 2000 that I first met Pham Thi Hue, a mother living with HIV who later became an Asian heroine. A long talk with her had made me a deep impression on the lives of HIV-infected women.

After meeting her, I found more chances to work with HIV-positive people, especially women. I also found out that women have become more vulnerable to HIV infection, far from what I have seen from the statistics in Vietnam that drugs are the main source of HIV transmission and men are the major victims. As a mother, I was deeply moved by the fate of many women living with HIV/AIDS and more than that, the short life of many children to whom HIV was transmitted by their mothers.

All my efforts led me to this research area. I feel lucky to have had the chance to work with PLHIV, and clearly acknowledge that I gradually understand the situation of HIV transmission from mothers to children in Vietnam, including the effect of health care system, culture with traditional norms and values, and personal difficulties of HIV-infected women. Besides the tears that we have shared through many sad stories, I also feel happy that I have contributed to understanding of the roots of some problems and have been able to do something to improve the situation.

I know that my papers could not have been successful without support from others. I would like to express my great appreciation for the technical advice of my promoters. Professor Anita Hardon, a medical anthropologist, has provided me with valuable advice on the study framework, design and thesis writing. She showed great patience and persistence through the long years of me completing this thesis. Professor Pamela Wright has worked with me for long hours, discuss and helping me to finish my writing, helping to revise the English of all of my articles, and encouraging me when I felt most discouraged. Professor Roel A Coutinho and Professor Hien provided me with very useful advice and comments on the study; the epidemiological papers benefited particularly from their contributions.

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On the home front, I would like to give my true love and thanks to my husband, my sons, my father and my sister’s family. I feel so lucky to have you always by my side to support when I went on field trips, and when I spent whole days to write my papers. Moreover, the greatest thank is reserved for my mother who guided my medical studies and gave me spiritual support all my life. All of you have given me the strength, courage, and belief to overcome all challenges to finish this thesis.

I can only add that any shortcomings and mistakes are entirely my own responsibility.