

Dettaglio abstract

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Title: Determinants of non disclosure of HIV status in PLWHIV to other than health care workers

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Measuring HIV stigma and disclosure

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Abstract

Background: HIV-related self-stigma represents a major risk factor for a range of poor health outcomes. The lack of HIV disclosure to other than health care personnel in PLWHIV could represent a proxy of self-stigma.

Material and Methods: An online anonymous survey on PLWHIV taking antiretroviral therapy (ART) was conducted, in order to investigate the self-reported correlates of disease burden and several other issues including physical, mental, sexual and overall health status. HIV Treatment & Diseases Burden (TDB) was investigated through a questionnaire containing 31 items -in 7 domains using a scale ranging from 1 to 5 (Cingolani et al, 2022) Further, HIV disclosure has been investigated through the question "Whom do you talk to about your HIV infection?". The response "I only talk about it with my treating physician/nurse" (yes vs no) has been used to categorize HIV disclosure: 'yes'=non disclosure (ND), 'no'=disclosure (D). The association between HIV-disclosure and demographic, clinical and TDB has been investigated.

Results: 531 PLWHIV completed the questionnaire. Characteristics of patients are reported in table 1. A total of 257 (48%) participants reported having disclosed their HIV status only to health care workers (ND-PLWHIV); 324 (52%) reported to talk about their HIV status with other people (D-PLWHIV). The HIV-TDB score was 2.14 (95%CI: 2.13-2.15) among D-PLWHIV and 2.21 (95%CI: 2.20-2.22) among ND-PLWHIV, without any statistical difference (p=0.456). ND-PLWHIV reported a more recent diagnosis of HIV (p=0.02), a lower level of current reported CD4 cell count (p=0.02) and were more frequently on first-line ART (p=0.01). Moreover, ND-PLWHIV reported more frequently the need to talk to health care workers about health issues not strictly related to HIV (33% vs 25%) compared to D-PLWHIV (p=0.04), and more frequently would like to obtain information on new ART drugs (43% vs 33, p=0.01). No differences in terms of physical, mental, sexual and overall health was found between ND-PLWHIV and D-PLWHIV.

At multivariable analysis, ND-PLWHIV showed an independent higher risk of current reported CD4 counts lower than 200/mm³ (AOR 2.48, 95%CI 1.38-4.46, p=0.02), after adjusting for year of HIV diagnosis v and being on first line ART.

Conclusions: The failure to overcome a clinical frailty related to HIV seems to be the main determinant of non-disclosure of HIV outside the HIV care. The relationship with the treating physician and the possibility of having a comprehensive dialogue with him should be pursued as a further strategy for self-stigma elimination.

Table 1.

General characteristics of 531 survey participants according with response to the question " Whom do you talk to about your HIV infection?".

	Talk about HIV with...				p-value
	other people		healthcare workers only		
Median age, (SD)	47.8	±10.9	48.5	±10.9	0.453
Male at birth, n(%)	277	85.5%	225	87.6%	0.473
Gender, n(%)					0.775
Cisgender	321	99.1%	254	98.8%	
Transgender	3	0.9%	3	1.2%	
Sexual orientation, n(%)					0.265
MSM	215	66.4%	180	70.0%	
Bisexual	24	7.4%	25	9.7%	
Eterosexual	79	24.4%	50	19.5%	
not specified	6	1.9%	2	0.8%	
Education, n(%)					0.151
Junior high school	21	6.5%	24	9.3%	
High school	158	48.8%	130	50.6%	
Degree	109	33.6%	67	26.1%	
Master	34	10.5%	31	12.1%	
other	2	0.6%	5	1.9%	
Italian, Nationality, n(%)	305	94.1%	238	92.6%	0.459
Employment, n(%)					0.238
Stable employed	199	61.4%	161	62.6%	
Not stable employment	40	12.3%	34	13.2%	
I'm seeking for work	30	9.2%	18	7.0%	
I do not work and do not seek	6	1.8%	13	5.1%	
Retired	36	11.1%	21	8.2%	
Other	13	4.0%	10	3.9%	
Year of HIV diagnosis, n(%)					0.016
<=2000	86	26.5%	58	22.6%	
2001-2010	75	23.1%	65	25.3%	
2011-2015	93	28.7%	53	20.6%	
>=2016	70	26.6%	81	31.5%	
Mode of HIV transmission, n(%)					0.807
Sexual intercourse with same sex	192	59.3%	161	62.6%	
Sexual intercourse with opposite sex	25	7.7%	16	6.2%	
Sexual intercourse, not specified	74	22.8%	57	22.2%	
Non sexual mode of transmission	33	10.2%	23	8.9%	
Year of ART starting, n(%)					<0.001
<=2000	74	22.8%	44	17.1%	
2001-2010	64	19.7%	70	27.2%	
2011-2015	106	32.7%	54	21.0%	
>=2016	80	24.7%	89	34.6%	
Last CD4, cells/mmc, n(%)					0.023
<200	20	6.2%	34	13.2%	
200-500	66	20.4%	47	18.3%	
>500	192	59.4%	135	52.5%	
Unknown	45	13.9%	41	15.9%	
Last HIV-RNA, copies/ml, n(%)					0.328
<50	276	85.2%	230	89.5%	
50-200	10	3.1%	6	2.3%	
>200	10	3.1%	3	1.2%	
Non ricordo	28	8.6%	18	7.0%	
First line ART, yes, n(%)	40	12.3%	50	19.5%	0.019
Polypharmacy (>5 pillole/die), n(%)	72	22.2%	51	19.8%	0.486