

## Dettaglio abstract

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**Title:** Sexual and reproductive unmet clinical needs in Italian women living with HIV: results from Marilyn study

**Presentation type:** Oral Communication

### Session/Topic

One size does not fit all

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### Abstract

**Background:** Women living with HIV (WLWH) face a unique variety of obstacles in their life and health-care journey with HIV : fear of disclosure, stigma-related and mental-related issues, sexual health management etc. Despite that, WLWH have been under-represented in many areas of HIV clinical research; therefore socio-structural barriers leading to gender-related health inequities still persist. Marilyn, a study promoted by Icona Foundation and community-based organizations, investigated for the first time the unmet needs of women living with HIV in Italy.

**Methods:** An anonymous nationwide web survey created by the Icona Community Advisory Board (CAB) was promoted by the clinical centers adhering to the Icona network and by Community websites and social media. The survey included 73 questions exploring several aspects such as socio-demographic characteristics (household composition and economic conditions), HIV-related health data, information on HIV disclosure, perceptions of stigma and self-stigma, and other female specific health aspect among which pregnancy, menopause, contraception and screening for cancer. The online RedCap survey was conducted from Jun2022 to March 2023.

**Results:** 210 women followed in 43 clinical centers of the Icona network and 11 other Italian infectious disease units participated to the survey. Median age is 52 (IQR 40-57); 33.5% were diagnosed in the last 10 years, 31.5% have a university degree or equivalent. 21.1% plan to get pregnant and 40.3% initiated pregnancy after HIV diagnosis. They refer having received a less than acceptable medical (30%), psychological (13%) and social assistance (22%) respectively during pregnancy. 58.2% report being in menopause (median age of entry 49, IQR 47-52); 25% report depression soon after menopause, 68% refer not having received support from their clinical center with respect to menopause and 73.8% declare they have not received hormone replacement therapy. Only 18% received accurate informations regarding menopause and HIV. A total of 92% are using or have used contraceptives, 79.3% of them use condoms. 42.1% were advised to have periodic screenings for gynecological diseases, but only 26.3% received them at their HIV clinical center. Moreover, 46.9% felt they need more information on medications and body change, 32.4% on menopause, 23.4% on screenings, and 22.1% on gynecological conditions, while just 33.8% report to be sufficiently informed.

**Conclusions:** The Survey indicates that WLWH do not receive adequate support for their sexual health needs. These findings suggest (i) to continue investigation on the unexpressed and unmet needs of

WLWH and (ii) to create HIV care pathways specifically designed for the female population and guidelines addressing menopause and its clinical management.

### Marilyn survey – WLWH In Italy: social characteristics and unmet needs

General anamnestic data	Age, nationality, region of residence, education, relationship status, children
HIV-related situation	Clinical centre, year of diagnosis, viral load, CD4, since ART, co-pathologies (STI, HPV, K uterus/breast) and screening related
Economic situation	Employment status, economic independence
Social situation	Disclosure, other HIV+ family members, disclosure difficulties, fears, post-disclosure feeling
Stigma	Why HIV test, health problems, processing of HIV status, HIV-related self-cognition, discrimination, self-limitation, knowledge of U=U, impact of U=U, information acquisition
Mental health and sexual life	Diagnosis of psychological disorder, psychological suffering, psychological post-diagnosis HIV pathway (if yes, public/private), association (if yes, why), sexual relations, sexual life satisfaction, ART side effects
Assistance at the Clinical Centre before Covid	Overall judgement, critical aspects, positive aspects
Assistance at the Clinical Centre during and after Covid	Change of judgement, critical aspects, positive aspects, change of Clinical Centre
Pregnancy and menopause	Planning for pregnancy, pregnancy from WLWH, unmet needs, menopause, need for information on menopause and HIV, contraceptive methods used/using (if yes, which ones)
Overall judgement	Health needs, psychological needs, availability for interview