Concerns: Stigma’s Harms

HIV-related stigma is reported to have harsh effects on cognition.

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Stigma related to HIV compromises the mental capabilities of older men living with the virus, according to cognitive tests that assess facets like memory and attention. Researchers studied 512 older white men who were receiving care for HIV in clinics across Canada. The participants were given questionnaires about their experiences with HIV-related stigma and their mental health. They also underwent cognitive testing. The study authors found HIV-related stigma contributed to lower performance on such cognitive tests as well as anxiety. There was also evidence, albeit weaker, that stigma led to depression. These negative effects in turn impaired the men’s everyday functioning and, for example, led them to withdraw from social activities.

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