Counseling Intervention Boosts Health of People With HIV Who Inject Drugs

The study was conducted in Indonesia, Ukraine and Vietnam.

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HIV-positive people who inject drugs (PWID) who received a counseling intervention on top of the standard of care were less likely to die and more likely to be in treatment for the virus and for substance abuse.

Publishing their findings in The Lancet, researchers from the HPTN 074 study enrolled 502 HIV-positive PWID between 18 and 60 years old in Indonesia, Ukraine and Vietnam. They also enrolled at least one HIV-negative individual with whom each HIV-positive participant partnered in the injection of drugs—806 such partners all told.

The HIV-positive participants were randomized to receive the standard of care or an additional intervention that included psychological counseling as well as guidance and support for navigating the health care system.

The participants were followed for one to two years. By the end of the follow-up period, 15 percent of the HIV-positive participants in the control group and 7 percent of those in the intervention group had died. This meant that the intervention was associated with a 53 percent reduction in the risk of death.

Twenty-six percent of the deaths among those with HIV were deemed clearly related to the virus, while 3 percent were a result of a drug overdose.

After one year of follow-up, among those with HIV, 41 percent of those who received the intervention had an undetectable viral load, compared with 24 percent of those in the control group. Also after one year, a respective 72 percent and 43 percent of those in the two study groups reported being in treatment for HIV. And a respective 41 percent and 25 percent of those in the two groups reported being in substance abuse treatment at the one-year mark.

To read a press release about the study, click here.

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