“Forgotten Ones” Report Looks at Latinos Aging With HIV

Despite the prevalence of low socioeconomic status, most survey respondents reported undetectable viral loads.

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What are the needs, challenges and experiences of primarily Spanish-speaking Latinos age 50 and older who are living with HIV? That information has been lacking, but a national collaborative report seeks to answer exactly that question.

Described as the first of its kind, the report is titled Illuminating the Needs of the Forgotten “Olvidados”: A National Health Assessment of Latinos Growing Older With HIV. Released by the Latino Commission on AIDS and the Hispanic Health Network, the report on a group that is too often forgotten (olvidados means “forgotten ones”) can be read and downloaded for free here.

The “Olvidados” report can be downloaded for free.Courtesy of the Latino Commission on AIDS and the Hispanic Health Network

According to the report’s summary, a few of the key findings include:

- The survey confirmed the low socioeconomic status and education levels among respondents, factors known to be associated with poor health outcomes.

- Most respondents said they have a provider, are insured and reported undetectable viral loads (all key aspects for remaining in the continuum of care). But a sizeable share, on average about one in four participants, reported being less than satisfied with some aspect of their provider's care. This is important to note, as provider satisfaction has been shown to be critical in engaging and maintaining individuals in care and significantly increases optimal health outcomes.

- One in three respondents indicated some level of difficulty with treatment adherence, warranting further exploration and explanation.

- A significant proportion of the sample, 43 percent, indicated some sexual activity within the last three months, but discussions of sexual health with providers were relatively infrequent, indicating a need for providers to engage aging patients proactively about their sexual histories.

- Fully half of the respondents reported issues with depression, highlighting the critical gap in mental-health services.

The study sample included 157 HIV-positive Latinos ages 50 to 80; 61 percent identified as male, 36 percent as female and 3 percent as transgender. The yearlong study included major cities in Texas, New York, California, Florida and Puerto Rico.

"It is urgent to understand the needs of people growing older and living with HIV. We must be the voice of the voiceless to ensure we meet their prevention, care and social needs free of stigma and discrimination at every level," said Guillermo Chacon, president of the Latino Commission on AIDS and founder of the Hispanic Health Network, in a press release on the report.

"It is important to study the structural and social determinants of HIV/AIDS disease among older Latinos and to develop effective responses," added David Garcia, EdD, MPH, director of research and evaluation and principal investigator for the Latino Commission. "Special attention must be dedicated to understanding the unique realities of both U.S.-born and foreign-born Hispanic

populations in our nation.”

The Latino community has been hit hard by the epidemic. To learn more from POZ, read “HIV and Latinos” and click #Latino.

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