HIV Diagnoses Decline Among Gay and Bi Men, Largely Driven by Whites

Between 2014 and 2018, the annual HIV diagnosis rate mostly flatlined or declined less among Black and Latino gay men, depending on age.

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As the annual rate of HIV diagnosis among men who have sex with men (MSM) declined by an average of 2.3% annually between 2014 and 2018, among Black and Latino men and teenagers, the rate largely remained stable or declined by a smaller proportion than among white men.

This is according to a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) analysis of National HIV Surveillance System data published in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. The study looked at data regarding HIV diagnoses among MSM living in 33 jurisdictions that had complete laboratory reporting for each year between 2014 and 2018.

In 2014, there were 19,789 HIV diagnoses among MSM in these jurisdictions, a figure that declined to 18,034 in 2018. In the latter year, men in this demographic accounted for 69.4% of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States.

During the study period, HIV diagnoses declined by 4.8% per year, on average, among white men. However, in the rate among white men 13 to 19 years old or age 55 and older did not change significantly.

Diagnoses declined by just 1.3% per year, on average, among Black men and did not change among African-American teenagers, those 35 to 44 or those 55 and older. Among Blacks 25 to 34, the rate actually increased by 2.2% annually on average.

The HIV diagnosis rate did not change significantly among Latino men as a whole, but it decreased by 3.7% per year among those 20 to 24 while increasing by 2.0% per year among those 25 to 34.

The study also looked at the proportion of MSM diagnosed with HIV who were linked to medical care for the virus within one month of diagnosis. This figure increased by an average of 2.9% per year on average during the study period, from 66.2% in 2014 to 74.4% in 2018. This rate increased by 3.8% per year among Black MSM, 3.2% per year among Latino men and 1.8% among white men.

In 2014, 51.1% of the men diagnosed with HIV were linked to care, started antiretroviral treatment and achieved a fully suppressed viral load within six months of diagnosis. This rate increased by an average of 6.8% per year, hitting 67.2% in 2018. The rate increased by 9.4% per year among Black MSM, 6.8% per year among Latino men and 4.4% per year among white men.

The greater improvement among Black MSM for linkage to care and viral suppression mask the fact that in 2018, a lower proportion of Black men (61.6%) were linked to care and had an undetectable viral load within six months of diagnosis compared with Latinos (69.6%) and white men (67.2%).

“These data warrant intensified prevention efforts for Black and Hispanic MSM, especially those aged 25 to 34 years and all MSM aged 13 to 19 years,” the study authors concluded.

To read the CDC report, click here.

In related news, see “National Gay Men’s HIV/AIDS Awareness Day 2020 [VIDEO].” NGMHAAD is observed Sunday, September 27.

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