A Holistic Approach Improves HIV Care

A global study examined how outcomes improve when physicians engage their HIV-positive patients in joint decision-making.

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A global study has found that a holistic approach to providing medical care for people living with HIV improved various health and well-being outcomes, including viral suppression and quality of life.

Such an approach, as evaluated in the Positive Perspectives 2 study, involved health care providers engaging people with HIV in an open dialogue and joint decision-making about their medical care.

A collection of four presentations at the International AIDS Conference, which is being held virtually this week, detailed findings from the study.

The Positive Perspectives 2 study, conducted by ViiV Healthcare, includes a diverse group of 2,389 people with HIV. They are 18 to 84 years old and hail from 25 countries.

“Results from the Positive Perspectives 2 study provide insights into the challenges we face as people living with HIV,” Erika Castellanos, director of programs at the Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE) and a Positive Perspectives 2 advisory committee member, said in a press release. “While great advances have been made in the treatment of HIV, these results show that those of us living with HIV still need support to empower us to confidently advocate for ourselves across all aspects of our care. HIV makes us more vulnerable to other health conditions, so it is crucial that we feel licensed to play active roles in our HIV care and regularly discuss changing treatment needs with our [health care providers].”

The ongoing study assesses how the participants rate their own health as well as how living with the virus affects their lives and their outlook on the future. It also examines the interactions and relationships that the participants have with their health care providers and their experiences taking antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for the virus.

Those people with HIV who reported a high level of engagement with their health care providers reported better health outcomes. This finding suggests that improving the quality of communication between physicians and their HIV-positive patients may boost quality of life.

Seventy percent (456 of 813) of those who reported a high level of engagement with their health care providers said they experienced optimal health, compared with 46% (334 of 756) of those who reported a low level of engagement. A respective 88% (716 of 813) and 47% (340 of 756) of the two groups reported being satisfied with their HIV treatment.

Sixty-five percent (1,556 of 2,389) of all the people in the study said they would like to be more involved in decisions about their ARV treatment. However, 77% (1,847 of 2,389) reported at least one topic about which they were uncomfortable having open discussions with their health care providers.

Sixty-six percent (1,588 of 2,389) of the participants reported that they had been informed that having an undetectable viral load means that an individual with HIV cannot transmit the virus through sex. This group reported more favorable health outcomes than the participants who had not been informed about this fact.

Twenty-three percent (161 of 699) of the participants age 50 or older reported that they had suboptimal physical, mental, sexual and overall health. Fifty-three percent (335 of 632) of this age cohort who entered the study having already taken ARVs and 84% (56 of 67) who were newly diagnosed (defined as having been diagnosed since 2017) reported barriers to raising concerns with their health care providers, including those related to medications.

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

To see all POZ coverage of AIDS 2020 Virtual, click here.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/holistic-approach-improves-hiv-care