Found: Those Lost to Follow-up

August 6, 2013 By Benjamin Ryan

In an effort to chip away at the high proportion of people diagnosed with HIV who are not engaged in regular care, New York City caseworkers successfully linked half of those who had been categorized as “lost to follow-up” between 2008 and 2010. Using data from mandatory names-based reporting of HIV test results, caseworkers from the city’s health department were able to identify 409 people lost to follow-up and bring 57 percent of them into care. After a year, 48 percent of the total had made two or more doctor’s visits and had received CD4 or viral load screens each time.

The caseworkers discovered that the most common reason for not engaging in HIV care, at 41 percent, was that people “felt well.”

“We believe it is a very worthwhile effort that has improved the lives of hundreds of residents in New York City,” says the study’s lead author, Chi-Chi N. Udeagu, MPH, who heads up the linkage to care program. “We have come across many clients who did not have the latest information on HIV treatment or who, feeling overwhelmed with their life circumstances, stopped prioritizing seeing their provider for HIV care. These clients have been grateful for all the encouragement and support they received from the health department staff.”

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