Experience Counts for HIV

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Many people with HIV rely on family doctors for their medical care instead of an HIV specialist. Unfortunately, a new study suggests that experience counts for a lot where HIV care is concerned.

To reach this conclusion, Canadian researchers analyzed data from a study of over 13,000 people with HIV conducted in Ontario between 2009 and 2012.

Just over half of these individuals exclusively saw a family practitioner for their HIV care. Thirty-four percent of those whose family physicians had five or fewer HIV-positive patients were taking antiretrovirals, compared with 40 percent of those whose family physicians had 6 to 49 patients with HIV, and 77 percent of those whose family doctors had at least 50 HIV-positive patients.

“Receiving [antiretroviral treatment] may be the most important thing a person with HIV can do to preserve their health,” says the study’s lead author, Claire Kendall, MD, PhD, a clinician investigator with the Bruyere Research Institute in Ottawa, Ontario. “But other things, such as health promotion and chronic disease prevention and management, are also important to those living with HIV and are well-suited to the primary care realm.”

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