Pain Means HIV Clinic Appointment No-Shows in Alabama Study

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Not only is pain common among people living with HIV, it increases the odds of missed clinic visits, according to a new University of Alabama, Birmingham (UAB), study published in the October 1 issue of the Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes (JAIDS).

Upon surveying 1,521 people beginning care at the main UAB HIV clinic between April 2008 and June 2011, 509 (34 percent) reported some degree of pain; 239 (16 percent) had pain alone, 189 (13 percent) had pain and depression or another mood disorder, and 30 (2 percent) had pain and were currently using illicit drugs.

Those who reported pain without substance abuse were 50 percent more likely to miss clinic appointments. Patients who reported pain and were current substance abusers were actually less likely to miss clinic appointments.

“In this study,” Jessica Merlin, MD, MBA, and her UAB colleagues conclude, “pain increased the odds of no-show visits but only for participants without substance abuse. Because pain, mood disorders, and substance abuse are highly prevalent in HIV-infected patients, our findings have implications for HIV treatment success. Interventions that incorporate pain management may be important for improving health outcomes in patients living with HIV infection.”

To read the JAIDS report (paid subscription required), click here.

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