Many Expectant or New African Moms With HIV Risk Passing on Virus

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A considerable percentage of pregnant or breastfeeding mothers in three sub-Saharan African nations have viral loads high enough to pass HIV on to their babies, aidsmap reports. Researchers conducted household surveys of 11,550 women in Kenya, Malawi and South Africa, testing all women for the virus, and taking reports from women about their pregnancy and breastfeeding status and the results of their last HIV tests. They presented their findings at the 2015 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Seattle.

A total of 37.8 percent of the women in Kenya were pregnant or breastfeeding, as were 33.8 percent of the women in Malawi and 12.5 percent of the South African women.

HIV prevalence among the pregnant or breastfeeding women ranged from 22.2 percent in Kenya to 13.4 percent in Malawi and 23 percent in South Africa. About 41 percent of the HIV-positive pregnant or breastfeeding women had a viral load above 1,000. The proportion was essentially the same across the study.

A total of 4.1 percent of the breastfeeding women who tested negative for HIV during prenatal care later contracted the virus, including 7.4 percent of such women in Kenya, 2.1 percent in Malawi and 4.9 percent in South Africa. These new infections made up 37.5 percent of the HIV-positive breastfeeding women with a viral load over 1,000.

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

To view a webcast of the conference presentation, click here.

To read the conference abstract, click here.

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