Social Determinants of Health Predict Risk of Death in HIV Population

A Canadian study found that factors such as employment and housing status, income and education were associated with mortality.

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Various nonmedical factors known as social determinants of health play into the elevated risk of death among the HIV population. This is according to a recent study of people living with the virus in Ontario, Canada.

Publishing their findings in AIDS and Behavior, researchers recruited 602 people living with HIV in Ontario from community-based agencies and followed them for five years.

At the end of the study period, the researchers were able to confirm the mortality of 454 members of this cohort. The 53 deaths that occurred, 73 percent of which were among people younger than 50, translated to a mortality rate of 22.3 deaths per 100,000 people, a rate much higher than the general population's death rate of 6.7 per 100,000 people. The death rate among the study population was higher among those living outside Toronto.

Thirty-six percent of those with a high school diploma and 20 percent of those without one died, as did 89 percent of those who were unemployed and 77 percent of those who were employed, 57 percent of those with a history of homelessness and 39 percent of those without such a history and 58 percent of those with a history of incarceration and 28 percent of those without such a history.

Among the study group's population of men who have sex with men, factors predicting mortality included having been incarcerated and homelessness. Among the women and heterosexual men, such factors included being white, having a history of incarceration and reporting being in poor or fair health.

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

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