Stressors Hamper Undocumented Africans' Access to HIV Care in U.S.

Researchers interviewed undocumented African immigrants living with HIV in New York City.

August 7, 2019 By Benjamin Ryan

Undocumented African immigrants living with HIV in New York City experience a multitude of anxieties that may serve as barriers to their accessing various services related to the virus, aidsmap reports.

Publishing their findings in AIDS Patient Care and STDs, Jonathan Ross, MD, and his colleagues at the Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York conducted semi-structured interviews in 2017 with 14 people with HIV from nine African countries who were undocumented immigrants.

The median age of the study cohort members was 44 years old. Nine participants were women. The median time since participants' HIV diagnosis was 16 years, and the median time since arriving in the United States was 14 years. All participants were receiving medical care for the virus.

The study authors divided their qualitative findings into four major themes.

Participants expressed fear that accessing HIV care and services might raise their risk of deportation. They also were unsure about their eligibility for health services because of their undocumented status.

The complexities of navigating the U.S. health insurance system were vexing for the participants, considering their marginalized status and their difficulty finding gainful employment. The need to find health insurance at all was novel to those hailing from countries where it is not required.

The intense social stigma toward HIV in African immigrant communities also weighed heavily on the participants and served as a barrier to seeking out HIV-related services.

Finally, on the upside, service providers, including health care providers, social workers and employees of community-based organizations, played a vital role in helping the participants overcome the myriad obstacles identified in the interviews and to engage in HIV care.

“Multilevel efforts to reduce stigma and increase awareness of available services could enhance rates of HIV testing and care linkage in this population,” the study authors concluded.

To read the study abstract, click here.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/stressors-hamper-undocumented-africans-access-hiv-care-us