Surveying the Needs of Women With HIV

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A recent survey of 180 HIV-positive women spells out the challenges and needs of this population in the rapidly changing health care landscape. Results were published in the report “Securing the Future of Women-Centered Care.” The findings show that “poverty, stigma and isolation present the greatest barriers to care,” says Naina Khanna, the executive director of Positive Women’s Network-USA (PWN-USA), which conducted the survey. “In addition, support groups and peer networks are a critical source of hope, inspiration and healing. These services and others must be embedded in the HIV care system for years to come.”

The unique needs of older women living with HIV—particularly those shouldering family responsibilities—also surfaced. “It’s clear that we need to ensure high-quality sexual and reproductive health care services and services like child care for women living with HIV, independently of age,” notes Arneta Rogers, an HIV and reproductive justice legal fellow at PWN-USA.

Members of the research team had their own takeaways: “One thing that struck me is how many women need counseling and mental health assistance but don’t know how to go about getting it,” says Pat Kelly of Orangeburg, South Carolina. And Evany Turk of Chicago notes that a lot of women with HIV would like to have children but erroneously think it’s not possible to do so safely. “If this conversation starts happening with their providers,” she says, “it will give them a choice and hope.”

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