Treatment Rates Rise, but Adherence Does Not for Young Black Men With HIV

Certain subgroups of this population, such as smokers and those with depression, are less likely to have an undetectable viral load.

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The rate of antiretroviral (ARV) treatment among young Black men in medical care for HIV has risen in recent years, while the rate of adherence to such treatment has remained flat, the National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project (NATAP) reports.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) researchers analyzed data from the Medical Monitoring Project on 336 young Black men receiving HIV care between 2009 and 2014 and presented their findings at the 2018 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Boston.

Fifty-four percent of the study population was living in poverty, 53 percent received Ryan White–funded HIV care, 12 percent experienced homelessness during the previous 12 months, 45 percent reported use of illicit drugs and 20 percent had depression. Eighty-two percent identified as gay or bisexual, and 72 percent reported sex with men during the previous 12 months.

Between 2009 and 2010, 61 percent of the young Black men received ARVs, a figure that increased to 88 percent by the 2013 to 2014 period. During those two periods, the proportion of those prescribed ARVs who reported taking 100 percent of doses during the previous three days was 66 percent and 72 percent, respectively. The difference between these two rates was not statistically significant, meaning that there was effectively no change in the adherence rate.

Among the study group as a whole, 56 percent had a fully suppressed viral load during 2009 to 2010 and 58 percent were virally suppressed during 2013 to 2014. By comparison, the proportion of the national HIV population that was virally suppressed in 2009 and 2013 was a respective 72 percent and 80 percent.

Among the young Black men in the study group, the proportion who had a durably suppressed virus, meaning an undetectable viral load according to all tests conducted during the previous 12 months, was just 25 percent during 2009 to 2010 and 34 percent during 2013 to 2014. The difference between these figures was not statistically significant.

A respective 52.3 percent and 66.8 percent of the study group living below and above the poverty level were virally suppressed, as were 52 percent of smokers and 64 percent of nonsmokers, 22.5 percent of men who were homeless and 37.5 percent of men who had a home, 28 percent of illicit drug users and 42 percent of non–illicit drug users, and 53.1 percent of men with depression and 77.6 percent of men without depression.

To read the conference abstract, click here.

To read the NATAP report, click here.

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