U=U Is Becoming Common Knowledge

Gay and bisexual men are increasingly understanding that “undetectable equals untransmittable."

February 24, 2020 By Benjamin Ryan

Gay and bisexual men increasingly grasp the fact that people with HIV who maintain an undetectable viral load cannot transmit the virus through sex.

Jonathon Rendina, PhD, MPH, of Hunter College of the City University of New York, led a research team that engaged nearly 112,000 men who have sex with men (MSM) in the United States in an online survey between November 2017 and September 2018.

When asked how accurate they believed the slogan “Undetectable = Untransmittable” (“U=U”) is with regard to HIV-positive individuals transmitting HIV through sexual contact, 55% of the men answered that the statement was “completely accurate” or “somewhat accurate.”

Eighty-four percent of the men who reported they had HIV correctly said the U=U message was accurate, as did 54% of the men who reported they were HIV negative and 39% of the men who said they did not know their HIV status. These figures compared favorably with a previous survey of 12,200 MSM conducted by the same researchers in 2016 and early 2017, which found that 64% of HIV-positive and 30% of HIV-negative men said U=U was accurate.

“Our hope is that understanding and acceptability will continue to grow with ongoing dissemination of the science through public health officials and health care providers and will be enhanced by the significant increase we’ve seen in popular media coverage of U=U as well as dissemination through social networks, [such as] popular apps like Grindr and Scruff,” Rendina said.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.