Viral Suppression Disparities

These disparities are based on jurisdiction, race and transmission category.

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Among people diagnosed with HIV in the United States, there are wide disparities in viral suppression rates based on jurisdiction, race and transmission category, according to information reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through 2016 from the 37 states (plus Washington, DC), that provided sufficient data.

In 2014, 58 percent of HIV-positive people who knew their serostatus and an estimated 47 percent of all people living with HIV were virally suppressed. A total of 65 percent of whites with diagnosed HIV were virally suppressed, compared with 58 percent of Latinos and 52 percent of Blacks. Similar disparities were seen in most jurisdictions.

For the most part, older individuals were more likely to be virally suppressed than younger ones, although this gap was narrower in the Northeast.

Breaking down their analysis by gender and transmission category, the CDC researchers found that men who reported having likely contracted the virus through sex with men had the highest viral suppression rate, at 61 percent. Males who likely contracted HIV through injection drug use had the lowest rate, at 48 percent.

Among those who received an HIV diagnosis in 2014, 68 percent were virally suppressed within 12 months of their diagnosis, a rate ranging between 92 percent in Montana and 60 percent in the District of Columbia. The average time between diagnosis and viral suppression was 6.9 months nationally, ranging from 4.5 months in Montana to 7.8 months in Mississippi and the District of Columbia.

“It is important for people with newly diagnosed HIV to be promptly linked to care so they can quickly attain viral suppression to reduce their window of infectiousness and improve their health outcomes,” says the paper’s author, Kristen L. Hess, PhD, an epidemiologist with the CDC’s Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention.

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