For Women With HIV, Unstable Housing Is Linked to Poorer Health Outcomes

A recent study sought to parse what factors mediated this association.

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Among HIV-positive women, being unstably housed is associated with a higher chance of having an unsuppressed viral load and an inadequate CD4 count, aidsmap reports.

Publishing their findings in Social Science & Medicine, researchers studied data on 3,082 participants of the Women's Interagency HIV Study who received medical care for HIV between 1995 and 2015 at sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Chicago, Washington, DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The researchers analyzed differences in funding from the federal program Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) per 1,000 people newly diagnosed with HIV in each of the local areas.

The members of the study cohort attended 57,323 follow-up appointments. At a total of 4.8 percent of these visits, the women reported being unstably housed, defined as having lived during the previous 12 months on the street or a beach or in a shelter, welfare hostel, jail, correctional facility or halfway house.

Higher HOPWA funding rates were associated with lower rates of unstable housing among the women. This association remained after the study authors took into account the women's age, education, relationship status and drug use.

Being unstably housed was associated with an 8 percent lower likelihood of being virally suppressed and also an 8 percent lower likelihood of having an adequate CD4 count, defined as a count higher than 350. When the study authors took into account variations in HOPWA funding, they found that unstable housing reduced the likelihood of these two outcomes by a respective 51 percent and 53 percent.

The study authors found that, compared with stably housed women, unstably housed women sought counseling and mental health services 25 percent less and used health care services 37 percent less; they also had a 76 percentage point lower likelihood of seeing the same medical provider over time.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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