HIV-Positive People Under 50 May Suffer More Stress, Isolation

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To the surprise of researchers, people living with HIV who are younger than 50 in a recent study suffered from greater levels of stress and isolation than the older generation, which tended to get on better. Publishing their findings in AIDS Care, investigators at Case Western Reserve University studied 102 HIV-positive men and women between 2011 and 2012, investigating links between stress, isolation and age.

The study participants ranged between 18 and 64 years old. The researchers divided them into two cohorts: those younger than 50 and those older. Reflecting the demographics of the HIV population in the Midwest, the typical participant was African American, 48 years old, had been living with the virus for about 14 years and was low income.

Those younger than 50 suffered from greater disconnection from family and friends than the older cohort. HIV stigma played a major role; the peers of the younger group apparently don't identify as well with someone who is living with a chronic condition. The blame game is also at play: Young people with HIV may feel that others both fault them for acquiring the virus and try to avoid them because they perceive them to be sick.

The older group, on the other hand, experienced less stress and had developed support systems through social networks developed over the years.

To read the release on the study, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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