

Research Update: HIV & Employment

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Purpose

- Clarify the relationship between employment and health for PLWHA
- Discuss the bidirectional relationship between employment status and health: Causation or Selection?
- Provide informational resources regarding employment policy
- Offer recommendations for rehabilitation professionals working with PLWHA



HIV/AIDS Statistics and Overview

- More than 1 million PLWHA in the US
- The 6th leading cause of death worldwide
- HAART has substantially improved the longevity of PLWHA
- 75% of PLWHA are males
- 55.9% are between 25-44 years old
- Prevalence highest in certain census tracts: poverty, education, unemployment



HIV/AIDS Statistics and Overview

- It's an often (but not always) disabling condition that effects people of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, genders, and SES statuses
- Epidemiology and demographics of the disease have shifted over the last 30+ years and now specifically include many more heterosexual people, women, African Americans, and Latinos
- HIV/AIDS care continuum still reactive, urgent, and medical – not much in terms of employment assistance, and there is limited gov't funding for employment initiatives



CSDH and CDC

- WHO formed Commission on the Social Determinants of Health in 2003
- Poor health and health inequities related to child development, globalization, health systems, employment, gender, social exclusion, and more
- In 2013 the CDC included employment as a SDH for PLWHA: first time
- 45-62% of PLWHA are unemployed



HIV/AIDS & Health

- Mental Health
 - Higher depression, anxiety, and psychological distress
 - 25% to 60% of PLWHA report a psychiatric comorbidity
 - anxiety, delirium, clinical depression, major depression disorder, mood disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder
 - Approximately 25% of PLWHA are diagnosed with PTSD



HIV/AIDS & Health

- Mental Health (cont.)
 - 22% of PLWHA have clinical levels of depression
 - Nearly twice the rate of the general population
 - Poorer medication adherence
 - Reduced immune system activity
 - 7 times as likely to commit suicide

HIV/AIDS & Health

- Physical and Neurological Health
 - A $CD_4 < 200/mm^3$ meets AIDS criteria
 - Viral load increases, CD_4 decreases, and physical functioning decreases
 - Effects of HIV/AIDS include: pain, peripheral neuropathy, body shape changes (e.g., lipodistrophy), and impaired ability to performed ADLs
 - Executive functioning can also decline:
 - Planning behavior
 - Monitoring behavior
 - Learning, attention, and memory



Employment & Health

- Mental Health
 - Employment has been correlated with improved psychological health, improved psychosocial functioning, improved self-esteem, and increased life satisfaction
 - Longitudinal studies, which are better able to show causation, have shown that employed individuals report:
 - Fewer psychological symptoms
 - Less psychological distress
 - Lower anxiety
 - Lower depression
 - Greater life satisfaction
 - Higher general mental health
 - Better health management
 - Less suicidal ideation



Employment & Health

The National Working Positive Coalition – Vocational Development and Employment Needs Survey (NWPC-VDENS) showed:

- Of those employed, after a period of unemployment:
 - 46% of participants reported increases in their CD4 count (37% reported no change and 18% reported a decrease)
 - 49% reported self-care increased (40% reported no change and 10% reported self-care decreased)
 - 21% reported an increase in medication adherence (71% reported no change, and 8% reported a decrease in taking medications as prescribed)
 - more than one third reported a decrease in their amount of alcohol use, drug use, unprotected sex, and number of sex partners



Employment & Health

- Physical and Neurological Health
 - Employment has been correlated with improved cognitive functioning, perceived health, and physical functioning
 - In longitudinal studies, employed individuals report:
 - Better ability to perform ADLs
 - Fewer chronic diseases
 - Better immune functioning
 - Lower mortality
 - Longitudinal studies of PLWHA reported much the same
 - PLWHA with physically demanding jobs leave jobs at higher rates than PLWHA with mentally demanding jobs



Policy

- Rehabilitation Act (1973); ADA (1990); Ticket-to-Work Program; National HIV/AIDS Strategy
- IOM HIV Disability Listing
 - 1) antiretroviral regimens; 2) access to care; 3) regular monitoring of CD4; and 4) recognition of several HIV-related diseases
- SSA; RSA; SSI; SSDI; PASS; EEOC
- .19% of PLWHA access rehabilitation services; 45% have successful outcomes



Recommendations

- HIV/AIDS Education
 - Service providers should obtain a baseline knowledge
 - Ryan White Program and AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs)
 - Understand transmission routes
 - Gain cultural competence
 - Sexual Orientation, Gender, Race, Drug Use, Etc.
 - Advocacy: reducing the stigma, prejudice, and discrimination

Recommendations

Why is HIV/AIDS stigmatizing?

- Some factors:
 - it is contagious and incurable
 - some modes of transmission are viewed by some as immoral or disgraceful
 - E.g., “gay disease,” IV drug use, sex work
 - it can cause disability
 - it is not well understood



Recommendations

- Stigma
 - Can be felt or perceived
 - Present as negative feelings, attitudes, or behaviors
 - Effects of stigma include: depression, poor self-efficacy, lower quality of life, and poorer medication adherence
 - Stigma in the workplace
 - People Living With HIV Stigma Index
 - Participate in community HIV/AIDS advocacy events



Recommendations

- Functional Assessment
 - Need an informed Individualized Plan for Employment
 - CD4 count and viral load offer prognostic information
 - WHODAS
 - Created by the World Health Organization
 - Aligns with International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)
 - Validated in 54 international studies
 - Six Domains: Cognition; Mobility; Self-care; Getting along; Life activities; and Participation



Recommendations

- Functional Assessment (cont.)
 - WHODAS
 - Mobility
 - 35% of PLWHA left jobs due to diminished physical functioning
 - Cognition
 - Adapt to demands of work environment
 - Time management
 - Problem solving
 - Goal setting



Recommendations

- Functional Assessment (cont.)
 - HIV and Mental Health
 - Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Somatization
 - Suicide Assessment Five-Step Evaluation and Triage (SAFE-T)
 - Assess for risk
 - Plan interventions
 - Document assessment



Recommendations

- Social Support
 - Decreases anxiety, depression, and health complaints
 - Emotional support and informational support
 - Associated with slowed CD4 decline in PLWHA
 - Approximately 84.5% of PLWHA report at least moderate loneliness
 - May be particular concern for minority PLWHA
 - Use WHODAS Getting Along Domain to assess



Recommendations

- HIV+ Women
 - Diagnosed later than men
 - Impact of employment on family (e.g., SSI, SSDI)
 - Children can be a source of social support
 - Cognitive and spiritual reframing is an effective coping strategy
 - Instinct to become isolative
 - Navigating transition from independence to dependence



Recommendations

- HAART
 - Many physicians will start HAART when $CD4 < 350/mm^3$
 - Need 95% adherence for an 80% chance of success
 - Barriers to adherence include: limited knowledge of need and effects, regimen complexity, undesirable side effects, depression, poor social support, forgetfulness, stigma, and more
 - Adherence Assessment and Medication Adherence Scale
 - Network with local ADAPs



Recommendations

- Resources
 - Understand relationship between HIV/AIDS, health, CD4, medication, employment, and public benefits
 - Education through Ryan White funded services and ASOs
 - Model-based approach to care
 - Client Focused Considering Work Model
 - Community-based Return to Work Program
 - Employment Decision-making Model for PLWHA
 - Making a Plan
 - Helping Overcome Problems Effectively
 - Kirk Employment Empowerment Project
 - PLWHA Job Placement Enhancement Model
 - Independent Employment Programs



Example Independent Employment Program

- 8 two-hour weekly psycho-educational group meetings run by rehab counselor or other qualified professional
- Topics covered:
 - To work or not to work and why?
 - Stigma, discrimination, disclosure
 - Reasonable accommodation
 - SSI/SSDI/Medicare/Medicaid/Health Insurance
 - Impact of work on health, health management
 - Resume writing and updating
 - Job seeking/interviewing skills
 - Employment services (e.g., VR) and resources



State-Federal VR Program

- Services to individuals with disabilities (many PLWHA are eligible)
- Eligibility: disability that necessitates services to prepare for/obtain/maintain employment
- Goal: obtaining and/or maintaining gainful employment
- Increases chances of employment for people with disabilities (Hayward & Schmidt-Davis, 2003)



Conclusions

- 50% of new HIV cases are in individual ages 25-44
- Less than 1% of PLWHA receive VR services
- HIV/AIDS negatively impacts mental, physical, and neurological health
- Employed individuals report improved health
- Employment Service Providers should understand the complexity of employment for PLWHA
 - Education; Social Support; HIV+ Women; HAART; Stigma; Resources
- Research is still necessary in the area of employment-seeking behaviors and motivations



National Working Positive Coalition

(www.workingpositive.net)

■ Who we are:

- Persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), service providers, educators, and researchers committed to improving the financial and personal well-being of individuals with HIV/AIDS

■ Mission:

- Promote research, development and implementation of effective practices in employment services
- Coordinate sharing and dissemination of this information
- Advocate for work options and opportunities for PLWHA

References and Resources

- Conyers, L. M. (2011). *Overview of the National Working Positive Coalition Employment Needs Survey. HIV/AIDS Employment Roundtable Proceedings* (Ed.). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Appendix C.
- Hayward, B. J., & Schmidt-Davis, H. (2003). *Longitudinal study of the vocational rehabilitation services program: Final report 2: VR services and outcomes*. Rehabilitation Services Administration: U.S. Department of Education. (ED Contract No. HR92022001).
- National Working Positive Coalition
 - <http://workingpositive.net>
- AIDS.gov: Links to services, the national HIV/AIDS Strategy info, and more
 - <http://aids.gov/>
- Directory of AIDS Service Organizations
 - <http://www.thebody.com/index/hotlines/other.html>
- Directory of State VR Offices
 - http://wdcrobcolpo1.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_cd=SVR