



# XVII INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE

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## Poster Exhibition Track D - Living with HIV

### THPE0682 - HIV/AIDS beliefs and adaptation to living with HIV in Lima, Peru

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**Background:** In Peru, the HIV/AIDS epidemic largely has been concentrated among female sex workers (FSW) and men who have sex with men (MSM). The seroprevalence for MSM is 10-22%, compared to 0.1-0.4% for the general population. The seroprevalence for FSW is 1%. Few qualitative studies with HIV-positive individuals in Peru have been carried out that investigate beliefs related to HIV/AIDS transmission and treatment and individual perceptions related to adaptation to living with HIV.

**Methods:** At two clinics that serve a large number of HIV-positive individuals in Lima, in-depth interviews were carried out with adult HIV-positive individuals receiving ART and other clinical services. Past studies informed the development of the topic guide and purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants. Interviews were transcribed and coded using two Spanish-speaking researchers and a content analysis approach to identify themes in the data.

**Results:** In 2006, 31 people living with HIV were interviewed. Of these participants, 28/31 (90%) were male, 25/31 (81%) were self-identified as mestizo, and 19/31 (61%) had an education above high school. Participants received information related to HIV and ART from a variety of sources: health care providers, friends, family, media, movies, books, and the Internet. A few HIV-positive individuals 6/31 (19%) had misconceptions regarding HIV infectiousness and the efficacy of ART. Many participants with higher levels of accurate HIV/AIDS and ART knowledge reported healthier behaviors and more positive perspectives. For some, because of the availability of ART in Peru, HIV was perceived as "one small part" of their lives. For others, living with HIV was difficult, unbearable, and socially isolating.

**Conclusions:** Further health education and support networks should be developed and disseminated to raise accurate understanding of HIV/AIDS and ART and to improve the quality of life of HIV-positive individuals in Lima, Peru.  
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