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Poster Exhibition Track D - Living with HIV

THPE0793 - Living with HIV/AIDS stigma 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 have been carried out in Peru that explore the effects of stigma on the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA).

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. A topic guide was developed 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 PLHA 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 reported high levels of perceived stigma at home, in their neighborhoods, at social events, and at work. 28/31 (90%) recognized stigmatization of their HIV/AIDS status by neighbors, friends, family, and coworkers. Due to perceived stigma, 22/31 (71%) feared disclosing their HIV status to anyone. Some participants reported that they made others believe that they had another illness, not HIV/AIDS. Some individuals reported that if their neighbors, friends, and/or family members knew they were HIV-positive, that they would no longer associate with them. Many participants felt embarrassed about their ART pill taking regimens and hid pills from friends, family, and coworkers.

Conclusions: In Peru, more widespread public health education campaigns are needed to decrease HIV/AIDS stigma and to increase community acceptance of individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Additional public health programs are needed to increase levels of direct interpersonal social support networks for individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

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