

Assessing HIV Prevention Knowledge and HIV Stigma in an Urban Midwestern Community

A. Uhlar BS¹, S. Lewis MS, MBA, MPH^{1,2}, A. Avery MD^{1,2}, M. Bogorodskaya MD^{1,2}



1. Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH 2. Division of Infectious Disease, MetroHealth Medical Center, Cleveland, OH



Background

Stigma and discrimination within communities remains a major barrier to HIV prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Prior studies have focused on HIV stigma as perceived by individuals with HIV and stigma among HIV care providers. Our study aims to assess knowledge of HIV prevention, the prevalence of certain misconceptions about HIV, and internal and external HIV-associated stigma within our community.

Methods

We surveyed community members at three STI clinics and employees at a community organization and the safety-net hospital in Cleveland, OH. The participants' involvement was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were asked questions regarding demographics, sexual behavior, HIV prevention, and HIV stigma.

Demographics:

- 262 **community members** were surveyed
 - 19.0% ≤24 years old
 - 51.5% were male
 - 85.2% identified as Black
 - 45.6% completed high school
- 137 **employees** were surveyed
 - 4.0% were ≤24 years old
 - 21.2% were male
 - 15.6% identified as Black
 - 43.1% graduated college/university

Results

Assessing Knowledge of HIV

People with HIV on medications are less likely to infect others. (True or False)

- **38.7%** of community members answered correctly
- **59.0%** of employees answered correctly P<0.001

HIV is a man-made virus. (True or False)

- **26.0%** of community members answered **incorrectly**
- **5.3%** of employees answered **incorrectly** P<0.001

There is a known cure for HIV/AIDS. (True or False)

- **42.5%** of community members answered **incorrectly**
- **18.7%** of employees answered **incorrectly** P<0.001

Assessing HIV- Associated Stigma

Do people around you talk badly about people living with HIV?

- **40.2%** of community members answered agree
- **42.5%** of employees answered agree P=0.66

I would be ashamed if someone in my family had HIV.

- **8.4%** of community members answered agree
- **3.7%** of employees answered agree P=0.08

I would not want my coworkers to know if I had HIV.

- **42.4%** of community members answered agree
- **60.9%** of employees answered agree P=0.009

Conclusion

- While internal stigma related to HIV appears to be low, expected external stigma remains high.
- Suspicions that HIV is a man-made virus and that a cure exists but withheld from certain communities were prevalent among the community.
- Further studies can help elucidate the underlying reasons that lead to persistent expected external stigma and suspicions associated with HIV.

