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Depression Prevalence, Treatment Status, and Association with HIV Viral Suppression among Adults Living With HIV in Care in the United States, 2009-2014

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An abstract of
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Abstract

Depression Prevalence, Treatment Status, and Association with HIV Viral Suppression among Adults
Living With HIV in Care in the United States, 2009-2014

By Runa Hatti Gokhale

Background: Previous research indicates a high burden of depression among adults living with HIV and an association between depression and poor HIV outcomes. National estimates of diagnosed depression, depression treatment status, and association with HIV clinical outcomes are lacking.

Methods: We used 2009–2014 data from the Medical Monitoring Project to estimate diagnosed depression, antidepressant treatment status, and associations with sustained viral suppression (all viral loads in past year <200 copies/mL). Data were obtained through interview and medical record abstraction and were weighted to account for unequal selection probabilities and non-response.

Results: Of adults receiving HIV medical care in the U.S. and prescribed ART, 25% (95% Confidence Interval [CI]: 23–28) had diagnosed depression during the surveillance period; most (65%) were prescribed antidepressants. The percentage with sustained viral suppression was highest among those without depression (72%, CI: 71%–73%) and lowest among those with untreated depression (66%, CI: 64%–69%). Compared to those without depression, those with a depression diagnosis were slightly less likely to achieve sustained viral suppression (aPR 0.95, CI: 0.93–0.97); this association held regardless of treatment status (aPRs 0.96 [0.94–0.99]; 0.92 [0.89–0.96], persons with treated and untreated depression compared to no depression, respectively).

Conclusion: The burden of depression among HIV-infected adults in care is high. While depression is statistically associated with a lower prevalence of viral suppression, this difference is not clinically meaningful. Diagnosing and treating depression in persons living with HIV remains crucial, however, to improve mental health and avoid other poor health outcomes.

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Introduction

One in four persons living with HIV has symptoms of depression [1]. Depression significantly affects health and wellbeing. Productive life-years lost from depression are greater than from diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer [2]. Depression is associated with an increased risk of suicide [3] and diabetes [4], and has been linked to higher incidence of poor outcomes in persons with cardiovascular disease [5-7].

Previous studies have suggested that persons dually diagnosed with HIV and depression are less likely to adhere to ART regimens and more likely to have detectable HIV viral loads than those without depression [8, 9], however most of these studies were conducted more than ten years ago with relatively small sample sizes. Depression treatment has been shown to increase the probability of HIV viral suppression [10] and ART adherence [11]; however there are no national estimates on the association of depression treatment with HIV clinical outcomes. We used medical record data to determine the prevalence of depression diagnoses and accompanying treatment status in individuals in HIV clinical care in the United States who were prescribed ART to assess whether treated and untreated depression are differently associated with HIV viral suppression.

Methods

Medical Monitoring Project design and data collection

The Medical Monitoring Project (MMP) is an HIV surveillance system designed to produce nationally representative estimates of behavioral and clinical characteristics of adults living with HIV in the United States. MMP is a complex-sample, annual cross-sectional survey. For the 2009–2014 data collection cycles, MMP described adults receiving HIV clinical care. US states and territories were sampled first, followed by facilities providing HIV care within sampled jurisdictions, and then by HIV-infected adults (persons aged 18 years and older) who had at least one medical care visit during January – April of each

cycle at participating facilities. Data were collected through face-to-face or telephone interviews and medical record abstractions for the one year preceding interview date for the 2009–2012 cycles and for the two years preceding interview date for the 2013 and 2014 cycles (hereafter referred to as the "surveillance period"). All sampled states and territories participated in MMP: California (including the separately funded jurisdictions of Los Angeles County and San Francisco), Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois (including Chicago), Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York (including New York City), North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania (including Philadelphia), Puerto Rico, Texas (including Houston), Virginia, and Washington. During the six MMP cycles included in analyses, the eligibility-adjusted facility response rate ranged from 76–86% and eligibility-adjusted individual patient response rate ranged from 49–56% [12-16]. Data were weighted on the basis of known probabilities of selection at state or territory, facility, and patient levels. In addition, data were weighted to adjust for nonresponse by using predictors of patient-level response, including facility size, race/ethnicity, time since HIV diagnosis, and age group.

Ethics statement

MMP, as a public health surveillance activity, was determined to be non-research in accordance with the federal human subjects protection regulations at 45 Code of Federal Regulations 46.101c and 46.102d and CDC's Guidelines for Defining Public Health Research and Public Health Non-Research [17].

Participating states or territories and facilities obtained local Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct MMP, if required locally.

Variables used in the analysis

"Any depression" was defined as documentation of depression on either outpatient or inpatient medical record abstraction from the patient's main source of outpatient HIV clinical care. Those diagnosed with depression were further categorized as having either "treated depression" or "untreated depression" based on the presence or absence of a prescription for an antidepressant in outpatient or

inpatient medical records. Viral suppression was defined as all HIV RNA levels undetectable or less than 200 copies per milliliter during the 12 months preceding interview date.

Analytic methods

We estimated weighted percentages and associated 95% confidence intervals (CI) for having any depression, treated depression and untreated depression. We then restricted our study population to those prescribed ART and used Rao-Scott chi-square tests to test associations of behavioral and clinical characteristics with any depression and untreated depression. We estimated weighted percentages for viral suppression stratified by depression status and used multivariate logistic regression and adjusted marginal predictions to estimate adjusted prevalence ratios (aPR) of HIV viral suppression conditional on depression status. We constructed two models, one that estimated the prevalence ratio of viral suppression for those with any depression versus no depression, and another that estimated the prevalence ratio of viral suppression for those with untreated depression or treated depression separately versus those with no depression. Each model was adjusted for potentially confounding variables. In all multivariate analyses we included variables as potential confounders that were significantly associated with any depression and viral suppression ($P \le 0.05$), as well as those important for face validity. To assess potential bias introduced by the change in the surveillance period (12 versus 24-months) between the 2012 and 2013 MMP cycles, we performed a sensitivity analysis. Specifically, we separately estimated the prevalence of depression and its association with viral suppression using 2009 – 2012 data and 2013 – 2014 data. All analyses were performed using procedures for survey data analysis in SAS/STAT 9.3 (SAS Institute, Cary, NC) and SUDAAN 11 (RTI International, Research Triangle Park, NC).

Results

Depression prevalence

Overall, an estimated 27% (95% Confidence Interval [CI]: 25%–29%) of US persons receiving care for HIV infection during 2009 to 2014 had diagnosed depression during the surveillance period; 10% (CI: 9%-10%) had depression and were not prescribed antidepressants and 17% (CI: 16%–19%) had depression and were prescribed antidepressants (Table 1). Among 28,279 MMP participants, 26,150 (92% of weighted sample) were prescribed ART and comprised our analytic sample for the remainder of analyses. Depression diagnosis was associated with sex (females 30% vs. males 26%; p < 0.01), sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity (Table 2). Respondents whose household incomes were at or below the federal poverty level had a higher prevalence of depression compared with those living above the poverty level (29% vs. 26%; p < 0.01), as did those who were homeless in the past 12 months compared with those who were not. Higher prevalence of depression was observed among those with health insurance coverage compared with those who were uninsured or covered through Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program assistance only, as well as among those whose HIV infection was diagnosed at least 10 years ago compared with those who were diagnosed with HIV fewer than 10 years ago (29% vs. 24%; p < 0.01). Similarly, higher prevalence of untreated vs. no depression was observed among females, those who identified their sexual orientation as bisexual or other, were living at or below the poverty level, were recently homeless, had insurance coverage, and had a longer duration since HIV diagnosis.

Depression and HIV viral suppression

The percentage of persons with sustained viral suppression was highest among those without depression (72%, CI: 71%–73%) and lowest among those with untreated depression (66%, CI: 64%–69%) (Table 3). When comparing those with a depression diagnosis to those without, after controlling for gender, race, homelessness, health insurance status, drug use, and time since HIV diagnosis, those with a diagnosis of depression were less likely to achieve viral suppression (aPR 0.95, CI: 0.93–0.96). When comparing those with either treated or untreated depression to those without depression, after adjusting for the same characteristics, those with treated and untreated depression were less likely to

achieve HIV viral suppression (aPRs 0.96 [0.94–0.99]; 0.92 [0.89–0.96], respectively). Sensitivity analyses demonstrated no significant impact of the change in surveillance period on the observed associations.

Discussion

Our study estimates that one-quarter of HIV-infected adults in care had diagnosed depression during the one or two years prior to interview and that most were prescribed antidepressants. While depression was previously linked to poorer HIV clinical outcomes including ART adherence and viral suppression, here depression was associated with only a modest decrease in viral suppression regardless of treatment status. This finding is encouraging with regards to HIV clinical outcomes and suggests depression may not be a significant barrier to ART adherence. However, depression is associated with many poor mental and physical health outcomes regardless of HIV status; providers should continue to diligently screen and treat depression in their patients living with HIV infection.

These are the first nationally representative estimates of diagnosed depression among HIV-infected adults in care in the U.S. Previous national estimates have relied upon self-reported symptoms of depression and indicate a depression prevalence similar to the 25% in this population [1]. The burden of depression among adults living with HIV infection is significantly higher than in the general population; Do and colleagues found a prevalence of current depression that was 3 times as high among adults in HIV care as within the general population of U.S. adults [1]. In addition, our study indicates that 65% of persons dually diagnosed with HIV and depression are prescribed antidepressants. Similar estimates in the literature are scarce, however a study of antidepressant treatment status among the general population of U.S. adults screening positively for depression estimate a treatment percentage of 30%; depression prevalence among this population was 8.4% [18].

Neither depression nor depression treatment status were associated with clinically meaningful differences in sustained viral suppression. Among people living with HIV, depression has been associated

with lower rates of ART prescription, poorer ART adherence, lower CD4 counts, higher viral loads, and higher incidence of comorbid illness [8, 9, 19-22]. The 2014 Recommendations for HIV Prevention with Adults and Adolescents Living with HIV discuss depression as a factor that could decrease ART adherence [23]. Our study finding that, regardless of depression treatment status, individuals dually diagnosed with HIV and depression and treated with ART are only minimally less likely to achieve viral suppression contradicts previously published reports. This finding may reflect change over time in HIV pharmacotherapy, including development of single-tablet ART regimens, decreased pill burden, and increased tolerability [24-26]. Simpler ART regimens may improve ART adherence in persons dually diagnosed with HIV and depression.

Individuals with depression are more likely to develop cardiovascular disease and more likely to develop diabetes, and to attempt suicide, and they have higher all-cause mortality than individuals without depression [7, 27-30]. Among those living with HIV, studies evaluating the associations between depression and non-HIV related clinical outcomes are limited. However, we know the burden of many non-HIV related clinical outcomes to be high in this population [31-33]. Productive years lost due to disability from depression are 3 times greater than from diabetes, 8 times greater than from cardiovascular disease, and 40 times greater than from cancer [34]. A 2016 WHO study found that scaling up depression and anxiety treatment led to a gain of 43 million extra years of healthy life over a 15-year period equaling \$310 billion [35]. It is crucial that providers remain diligent in diagnosing and treating depression among their patients living with HIV.

Guidelines addressing depression treatment for persons living with HIV exist, but could benefit from updates to reflect advances in HIV pharmacotherapy. The American Psychiatric Association Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Persons with HIV/AIDS were published in 2000, and while the organization has since published a Guideline Watch [36], the Guideline itself has not been reviewed or updated since its initial publication [37]. The Guideline suggests that individuals living with HIV infection

should be treated for depression per standard depression treatment recommendations. Specific guidance is given for the assessment and monitoring of potential drug-drug interactions, but given the shifting landscape in HIV pharmacotherapy, updated guidelines may assist providers in selecting appropriate antidepressant regimens that will not disrupt HIV treatment plans.

Limitations

This study has limitations. We relied on provider diagnosis of depression to assess depression status; patients with depression not diagnosed by their provider would not have been categorized as depressed; other analyses have examined self-reported depression symptoms [1]. Moreover, we abstracted medical records only from individuals' primary HIV provider; records held at other locations were not included in analysis. It is possible that depression diagnoses were missed in this way. We were not able to assess the prevalence of psychotherapy treatment. It is possible that some of the 35% of individuals not prescribed pharmacotherapy in our study were receiving psychotherapy alone.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while one quarter of HIV-positive adults in care in the United States have diagnosed depression, depression is not associated with a clinically significant lower prevalence of sustained viral suppression regardless of depression treatment status. However, it is important to note that depression, when undiagnosed and untreated, can result in poor mental and physical health outcomes regardless of HIV status. Given the high prevalence of depression among persons living with HIV, it is crucial that HIV clinical providers remain vigilant in diagnosing and treating depression in their patients.

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http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/systems/mmp/resources.html#StudyGroupMembers.

Table 1. Prevalence of depression among HIV-infected adults in care in the United States: Medical Monitoring Project, 2009-2014 (n=28,279)

	Weighted %		
	(95% CI)		
No Depression	73 (71 - 75)		
Any Depression	27 (25 - 29)		
Untreated Depression	10 (9 - 10)		
Treated Depression	17 (16 - 19)		

Table 2. Characteristics of HIV-infected adults in care diagnosed with depression in the United States: Medical Monitoring Project, 2009-2014 (n=26,150)^a

Characteristic		Any Depression (n=26,150) Weighted % (95% CI)	P value	Untreated Depression (n= 26,150) Weighted % (95% CI)	P value
Total		27 (25–29)		9 (9–10)	
Age in years			0.0629		0.3903
	18-29	24 (22–27)		10 (8–12)	
	30-39	26 (24–28)		10 (9–11)	
	40-49	28 (25–28)		9 (8–10)	
	≥50	27 (26–29)		9 (8–10)	
Gender			<.0001		0.0059
	Male	26 (24–28)		9 (8–10)	
	Female	30 (28–33)		11 (9–12)	
	Transgender ^b	27 (22–33)		10 (7–13)	
Sexual Orientation			0.0012		0.0074
	Homosexual	28 (26–30)		9 (8–10)	
	Heterosexual	25 (23–27)		10 (9–11)	
	Bisexual	28 (25–31)		11 (9–12)	
	Other	28 (20–36)		11 (7–16)	
Race			<.0001		0.6783
	White, non-Hispanic	33 (30–36)		10 (9–11)	
	Black, non-Hispanic	23 (21–24)		9 (8–10)	
	Hispanic ^c	25 (22–28)		9 (8–10)	
	Other	32 (29–35)		10 (8–12)	
Highest level of education	Other	, -,	0.8172	, ,	0.0475
nighest level of education	ا د حامه طالع	27 (25–30)	J.U1/ Z	10 (9–11)	0.0473
	<high p="" school<=""> High school diploma or equivalent</high>	27 (25–29)		10 (9–11)	

>High school	27 (25–29)		9 (8–10)	
Level of poverty ^d		0.0008		0.0002
Above poverty level	26 (24–28)		9 (8–9)	
At or below poverty level	29 (27–31)		11 (10–12)	
Homelessness		<.0001		0.0001
No, not homeless	26 (25–28)		9 (9–10)	
Yes, was homeless ^e	36 (33–39)		12 (11–14)	
Health insurance coverage during the last 12 months		<.0001		0.0117
Uninsured	22 (20–23)		8 (7–9)	
Yes	28 (26–30)		10 (9–10)	
Uninsured (Ryan White only)	23 (21–26)		8 (6–9)	
Any drug use in the previous 12 months		<.0001		<.0001
No	25 (23–27)		9 (8–10)	
Yes	33 (30–35)		11 (10–12)	
Duration of HIV		<.0001		0.0394
<10 years	24 (23–26)		9 (8–10)	
≥10 years	29 (27–31)		10 (9–11)	
ART adherence (100% dose adherence in the previous 3 days)		<.0001		0.0008
No	32 (29–35)		11 (10–13)	
Yes	26 (25–28)		9 (8–10)	

^aAnalyses limited to those who received an ART prescription

^bPatients were classified as transgender if sex at birth and gender reported by the patient were different, or if the patient chose transgender in response to the question about self-identified gender.

^cHispanics or Latinos might be of any race. Patients are classified in only 1 race/ethnicity category.

^dPoverty guidelines as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); the 2013 guidelines were used for patients interviewed in 2014 and the 2014 guidelines were used for patients interviewed in 2015. More information regarding the HHS poverty guidelines can be found at http://aspe.hhs.gov/frequently-asked-questions-related-poverty-guidelines-and-poverty.

^eLiving on the street, in a shelter, in a single-room–occupancy hotel, or in a car.

Table 3. Prevalence of HIV viral suppression and unadjusted and adjusted associations between a diagnosis of depression and viral suppression among HIV-infected adults in care in the United States: Medical Monitoring Project, 2009-2014 (n = 26,150)^a

Weighted
Prevalence of Viral
Suppression

Virally Suppressed

PR (95% CI)

	% (95% CI)	Unadjusted	P value	Adjusted ^b	P value
Model 1					
No depression	72 (71 - 73)	1.00		1.00	
Any depression	69 (67 - 70)	0.96 (0.93 - 0.98)	< 0.0001	0.95 (0.93 - 0.97)	< 0.0001
Model 2					
No Depression	72 (71 - 73)	1.00		1.00	
Treated Depression	70 (68 -72)	0.97 (0.95 - 1.00)	0.0228	0.96 (0.94 - 0.99)	0.0018
Untreated Depression	66 (64 - 69)	0.92 (0.89 - 0.96)	< 0.0001	0.92 (0.89 - 0.96)	< 0.0001

^aAnalyses limited to those who received an ART prescription

^bAdjusted for potential confounders (gender, race, homelessness, health insurance status, drug use, time since HIV diagnosis)

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