

SEXUAL SATISFACTION AMONG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN AUSTRALIA: ENDURING IMPACTS OF HIV-RELATED STIGMA

Bourne A^{1,2}, Norman T¹, Rule J³, Power J¹

¹Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, ²Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, Australia, ³National Association of People with HIV Australia, Sydney, Australia

Background:

People living with HIV (PLHIV) have historically faced a range of challenges negotiating satisfying sex lives in the context of virus-transmission risks and HIV-related stigma. We examine the experience of sexual satisfaction in an era of PrEP and U=U.

Methods:

Data are derived from HIV Futures 9, a cross-sectional survey of PLHIV in Australia conducted between December 2018 –May 2019. Multivariable logistic regression was used to identify factors independently associated with sexual satisfaction, including awareness of/engagement with U=U and PrEP as well as experiences that denote HIV-related stigma.

Results:

In total, 689 participants reported on their sexual satisfaction, of whom 57% reported they were not satisfied with their sex life (56.5% gay/bi men; 58.9% women). Those who experienced sex partners rejecting them based on their HIV status were significantly more likely to report sexual dissatisfaction compared to those who had not had this experience. Those who avoided sex because of their HIV status were also more likely to report sexual dissatisfaction, as were those who were over 50 and those with worse self-reported health. Participants who expressed a concern about their drug use were more likely to report sexual dissatisfaction compared to those who expressed no such concern. There were no differences in sexual satisfaction according to gender, sexuality, time since diagnosis, viral load, PrEP use by sexual partners, awareness of U=U and confidence in biomedical technologies to prevent transmission.

Conclusion:

The right to a satisfying sex life does not end at the point of an HIV diagnosis. While there is documented evidence of biomedical prevention technologies helping to alleviate anxiety relating to sex among many PLHIV and their partners, HIV-related stigma still remains a live concern. Acts of rejection, as well as internalised stigma, continue to have a significant and negative impact on the enjoyment of sex for those living with HIV.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

This study was funded by the Australian Department of Health