Sociocultural correlates of HIV/AIDS-related stigma in rural Jamaica.

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Authors

Mahdi, IK, Ehiri, JE, Ogunnowo, OO, Bayard, B, Krawcyzk, CS, Miller, S, Jolly, C, Jolly, P

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Abstract

UNLABELLED: BACKGROUND: AIDS-related stigma is one of the biggest obstacles in the fight to prevent HIV transmission. Since stigma deters people from seeking treatment or getting tested for HIV, determining the factors that underpin AIDS-related stigmatization may be key to finding new ways to improve care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and to reduce new infections.

SETTING: The town of Lucea and surrounding communities in the parish of Hanover, Jamaica.

METHOD: Cross-sectional questionnaire survey of 195 individuals from health centers and households in Hanover.

RESULTS: Of the 195 respondents, 28 percent felt the names of HIV-positive people should be public information. We found three constructs (avoidant behavior, social contact stigma, and blame stigma) that underpin stigmatization of PLWHA. The factors that influence avoidance behavior were education and being married. The factors associated with social contact stigma were being married and having no acquaintance with PLWHA. The factor that influenced blame stigma was not owning a home.

CONCLUSION: Public health campaigns to reduce stigmatization must address individuals on the basis of their socio-demographic characteristics. A critical appraisal of current anti-stigma measures is warranted, and appropriate anti-stigma interventions are needed.
Interventions with community members should address the social context of stigma, particularly the arenas of community norms, through education, information, and legislative measures to promote interaction with, and positive attitudes toward, PLWHA.