

Hispanics in Texas: Late HIV Diagnosis and Out of Care

Texas Department of State Health Services HIV/STD Program

The Big Picture

In the last five years, the number of Texans living with HIV has increased by over 20 percent. In 2012, there were about 72,900 people known to be living with HIV in Texas. At the same time, the annual number of newly reported HIV infections has been stable – about 4,400 cases a year, as is the number of deaths among HIV infected persons, about 1,500 a year with approximately 650 directly attributable to HIV/AIDS. In short, the number of people living with HIV grows larger each year.

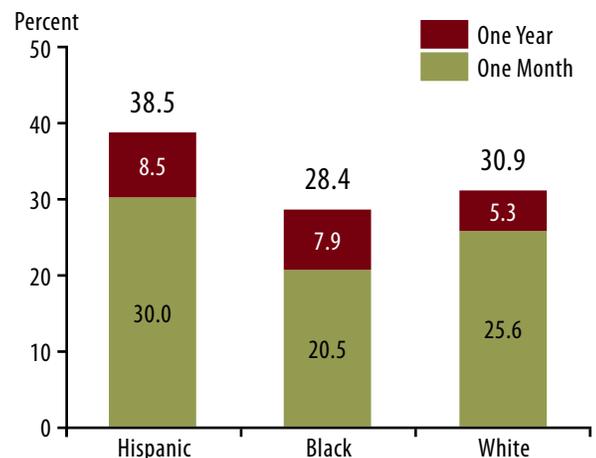
Late Diagnosis

It is estimated that 18-21% of people who are infected with HIV do not know of their infection. For Texas, this means that more than 16,000 Texans may be infected with HIV, but do not know it. Those who are diagnosed often find out after years of living with HIV.

Data shows that one in three Texans with HIV received a late diagnosis of their infection. A late diagnosis means the person was also diagnosed with AIDS within one year of an HIV diagnosis. This is especially true of Hispanics -- nearly two in five Hispanics with HIV received a late diagnosis.

Based on the last five years of new diagnoses (2008-2012), Hispanics were more likely than other groups to get a late diagnosis. Thirty-nine percent of Hispanics got a late diagnosis, compared to about 31% of Whites and 28% of Blacks. The disparity was even greater for Hispanic men. About 44% of Hispanic men got an AIDS diagnosis within 12 months of their first diagnosis of HIV infection. As late testers, Hispanic men represent missed opportunities for prevention and treatment. Thirty-three percent of Black men and 35% of White men were diagnosed late as well.

Percent of New HIV Diagnoses with an AIDS Diagnosis within One Month and One Year, Texas 2008-2012



Out of Care

In 2012, 27 percent of people living with HIV (PLWH) had no evidence of HIV-related medical care. Men were slightly more likely than women to be out of care (27% and 25%, respectively). Because PLWH remain predominately men, men comprised nearly 80 percent of those out of care.

What gets in the way of getting into care? Active substance abuse and “feeling well” contribute to people not getting care. Lack of insurance and poverty are also obstacles. Often times, people do not know how to access low-cost services in their community.

Texas has the highest rate of uninsured people in the U.S. – approximately 25 percent. About 39 percent of Hispanic Texans have no form of health insurance compared with White and Black persons at uninsured rates of 14 and 23 percent, respectively.

In 2011, 53 percent of Texas residents were below 250 percent of poverty level and 21 percent were below 100 percent poverty level. Of the racial/ethnic groups, 34 percent of Hispanic persons were below 100 percent of poverty level compared to Black persons at 31 percent and White persons at 12 percent. When a person is struggling to provide shelter and food, care for a long-term illness becomes a lower priority.

Concern and fear regarding their immigration status can prevent some Hispanics from accessing HIV care. Some are not aware that confidentiality regarding diagnosis and care is protected.

Hispanic gay men and other Hispanic men who have sex with men may not be out about their sexual orientation to those close to them. Stigma and fear of rejection by family or friends often creates a barrier to HIV testing and treatment.

The Pay Off

What will it take to drive down new cases? Early diagnosis and effective treatment of HIV are important keys to reducing new HIV infections.

PLWH are less likely to infect others when effective treatment lowers the amount of virus in their bodies. However, the risk of HIV is not eliminated, so sexually active people should continue to use condoms consistently. Learning your HIV status early and getting into care sooner leads to better health outcomes. It also costs less to know your HIV status early than to pay for expensive care once HIV progresses to AIDS.

Fortunately in Texas, there is assistance with accessing care and low-cost care options. To protect yourself and those you care about:

Get tested
Know your status
Get help finding care

FAST FACT

Disparity

As of 2008, Hispanics were 15.4 percent of the U.S. population but accounted for 19 percent of those living with AIDS.

RESOURCES

Visit hivtest.org to find an HIV or STD testing site.

Call 211 or (800) CDC-INFO to find an HIV/AIDS service provider in Texas or locate other patient resources.

Texas HIV Medication Program

Refer patients unable to pay for HIV medications to (800) 255-1090.



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