

# CO-OCCURRING PSYCHO-SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN TRANSGENDER WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV ENROLLED IN A CLINICAL TRIAL IN ARGENTINA

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## INTRODUCTION

Co-occurring health problems, including poor mental health, stigma and discrimination, and economic hardship are syndemic factors that cumulatively determine HIV vulnerability in transgender women (TGW). Despite universal access to public health in Argentina, and the Gender Identity Law, passed in 2012, that guarantees comprehensive healthcare for transgender people, TGW continue being one of the most vulnerable communities. Healthcare avoidance is frequent, estimated life expectancy is 35 years old and HIV prevalence is 34.1%. Therefore, we designed a prospective study to evaluate the effect of co-occurring psycho-social factors in the retention and adherence of TGW in HIV treatment.

## OBJECTIVE

This abstract shows preliminary analysis of baseline social and psychological assessments of treatment-naïve HIV-1 TGW enrolled in a clinical trial in Buenos Aires City.

## METHOD

During their first medical visit, participants completed a series of social and psychological assessments: ad hoc Gender Identity Stigmatization Scale (GIS), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), Center for Epidemiological Studies – Depression scale (CES-D), Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), Well-being Index and Personality Inventory for DSM-5 Brief Form (PID-5-BF). Sample was divided based on the status of their HIV infection (advanced vs no-advanced). Frequencies and bivariate correlations were calculated with SPSS 24.

## RESULTS

The sample consisted of 35 TGW, median age 29 (IQ: 26-36). The 42.9% (n = 15) of the sample presented advanced HIV infection (22.9% CD4 <350; 20% CD4<200). As shown in Table 1, TGW had low levels of formal education and high frequency of sex work, lack of stable housing and drug consumption in the last year. Bivariate correlations showed that the higher the gender identity stigma (GIS), the higher the suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety and the lower the quality of life. Moreover, GIS was also associated with three of the main maladaptive personality traits as measured by the PID-5. TGW with higher levels of GIS, reported more negative affectivity, psychoticism and detachment (Table 2). Approximately half of the sample (48.6%) experience clinical levels of negative affectivity (negative emotions and poor self-concept). ►

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the small sample size, results of this baseline analysis show that almost half of TGW initiate treatment with advanced HIV infection, present poor social indicators and demonstrate a strong association between gender identity stigma and negative psychological outcomes, particularly among those with advanced infection. Since these co-occurring psycho-social factors might negatively impact in retention and adherence of HIV treatment, it is important to consider multi-component intervention targeting TGW psycho-social needs, as standard of care in clinical settings.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the total sample and by type of infection

	Total sample n (%) n =35	Advanced Infection n (%) n =15	No-Advanced Infection n (%) n =15
<b>Education attainment</b>			
High school or greater	14 (40.0)	6 (40.0)	5 (25.0)
Less than high school	21 (60.0)	9 (60.0)	15 (75.0)
<b>Lack of stable housing</b>			
Yes	13 (37.2)	4 (26.7)	9 (45.0)
No	22 (62.9)	11 (73.3)	11 (55.0)
<b>Current sex work</b>			
Yes	24 (68.6)	10 (66.7)	14 (70.0)
No	11 (31.4)	5 (33.3)	6 (30.0)
<b>Employed (other than sex work)</b>			
Yes	11 (31.4)	11 (33.3)	6 (30.0)
No	24 (68.6)	24 (66.7)	14 (70.0)
<b>Drug Consumption</b>			
Yes	20 (57.1)	20 (60.0)	11 (55.0)
No	15 (42.9)	15 (40.0)	6 (45.0)

Table 2. Correlations between Gender Identity Stigma (GIS) and main Psychological variables for advanced and no-advanced HIV-infection

	Gender identity Stigma Total sample	Gender identity Stigma Advanced Infection	Gender identity Stigma No-Advanced infection
<b>Depression</b>	.55**	.53*	.63**
<b>Suicidal Ideation</b>	.57**	.35	.71**
<b>Anxiety</b>	.53**	.65**	.39
<b>Quality of Life</b>	-.34*	-.37	-.34
<b>Maladaptive Personality Traits</b>			
Negative Affectivity	.43*	.61*	.37
Psychoticism	.39*	.74**	.12
Detachment	.36*	.67**	.07