

New Studies Link the Mental Health Effects of Trauma with Poorer HIV Treatment Access and Outcomes for Women

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Women who are HIV-positive and who have experienced recent abuse are over four times more likely to have their drug treatments fail, according to recent studies based on meta-analyses of clinical data and published in the journal *AIDS and Behavior*.

The studies suggest that several factors may impact a woman's treatment access and outcomes, including direct interference by an abuser as well as obstacles that may exist if a woman is experiencing the mental health effects of trauma, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

According to the lead author of these studies, Edward Machtinger, the results indicate a need for a trauma-informed approach to HIV/AIDS treatment:

"We have to learn to ask about trauma and to develop creative approaches to trauma-prevention and trauma-recovery," Machtinger said. "This is actually an amazing opportunity to have a significant impact on the HIV/AIDS epidemic, especially among minority women." (Bardi 2012)

The study also found that women who are HIV-positive and who have experienced recent abuse are more likely to engage in high-risk sexual behavior, potentially contributing to the spread of infection.

References:

Allday, E. (2012, March 23). Studies see link between HIV and abuse among women. *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. 1A. Web site: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2012/03/22/BAF51NOBEG.DTL>.

Bardi, J. (2012, March 23). Trauma drives HIV epidemic in women: high rate of trauma among American women with HIV/AIDS and its public health consequences revealed in two UCSF studies. UCSF News Center. Web site: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2012/03/22/BAF51NOBEG.DTL>.

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Links to the studies:

Psychological Trauma and PTSD in HIV-Positive Women: A Meta-Analysis:

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/65735j14q7r70640/>

Recent Trauma is Associated with Antiretroviral Failure and HIV Transmission Risk Behavior Among HIV-Positive Women and Female-Identified Transgenders:

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/n164716853x285h7/>