

## Mental Health in HIV: Stigmatization and Discrimination

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### Abstract

For about 2 years many factors such as social distancing, quarantine, school closures and less face-to-face communication have affected human mental health. Self-isolation, extra care for hygiene, fear of getting infected and lack of face-to-face contact created a world that is totally "online". It is a fact that SARS-CoV-2 has an inevitable impact on the nervous system, but we should not forget mental health while thinking about the pathophysiology of the disease [1].

**Keywords:** COVID-19; HIV; Stigmatization; Mental Health

### Introduction

Human mental health has faced a terrible situation called the COVID-19 pandemic. Not just only physical health was affected but with quarantines, ICUs and curfews humanity suffered from isolation and loneliness. Thus, this led to mental health issues even in most healthy minds. Likewise, one of the main issues affecting the mental health of patients is HIV/AIDS.

The course of the disease, the antiviral therapies and side effects aside, this group of individuals suffer from mental health issues around the world. Many factors play roles in this state such as the clinical course of the disease, the diagnosis process, adapting to a lifestyle in order to protect themselves from many kinds of infections including simple viruses and most important of all the stigmatization and discrimination in society every day. Here we tried to review some of these stigmas and the way they affect PLWHIV's mental health.

### Discussion

Human mental health has faced a terrible situation called the COVID-19 pandemic. Not just only physical health was affected but with quarantines, ICUs and curfews humanity suffered from isolation and loneliness. Thus, this led to mental health issues even in most healthy minds. Likewise, one of the main issues affecting the mental health of patients is HIV/AIDS.

Anxiety and depression rooted in COVID-19 held back lots of the patients going to healthcare services during quarantine and curfew seasons in 2020 and 2021. This led to late diagnosis, disruptions in long-term treatments etc. COVID-19 has brought the topic of mental health to minds once more. It is inevitable that both physical and mental health can be simply affected in the course of different diseases. Not only the pathophysiology of diseases may cause neuropsychiatric complications but also one of the crucial factors is how society accepts and encounters the group of patients.

PLWHIV deal with stigmas every day and night. It negatively impacts their health, testing, drug regimens, well-being, treatment, and overall mental health [2]. The course of society accepting AIDS as a disease like others has had its ups and downs. Although there are still stigmas in society against the PLWHIV, less but still dwells like cancer. These stigmas are seen more than it is shown on TV news, newspapers, daily magazines, social clubs, schools, dormitories and much more that we face every day but do not recognize. As a result, PLWHIV are forced to have a resilient attitude and hide their living as if it is a shameful thing. But this resilience can be effective for creating a durable mind even in chaotic conditions in an unhumanitarian way [3]. On a wider page, as we expected, mental health is affected in both conditions, before and after being diag-

nosed with HIV; in other words, patients may get a late or delayed diagnosis just because of the fear of facing the stigmas in society and may be getting a delayed treatment.

In summary, the stigmas the PLWHIV face, which are known to have a direct effect on their mental health are vigorous and profound that could lead to physiologic and pathologic situations deteriorating the course of the disease. In a study on 250 cases diagnosed with HIV, Social support, socioeconomic level, service use, and indicators connected to HIV were all evaluated, as well as the severity of psychiatric status. As a result of their mental health being affected many face psychiatric diseases such as depression, dementia, substance use disorders and anxiety [5].

## Conclusion

In addition to dealing with physical health issues, PLWHIV face difficulties with their mental health and social well-being, both of which compromise their general health. These synergistic health issues are brought on by HIV, HIV therapies, ageing itself, and the emotional and structural aspects of their life [3].

Exercise, progressive resistance training, or a mix of the two is seen as a complementing component of medical care and treatment for HIV-infected people. Physical activity is known to have some kind of a healing effect in both clinical courses and mental health [4]. HIV and psychiatric diseases share some risk factors and are intimately related to one another [5]. Peer support groups and community service activities should be made available to PLWHIV as part of community-based interventions [6].

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