

Older gay black men living with HIV report higher quality of life than older gay white men, despite facing additional burdens

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INTRODUCTION

Due to advances in antiretroviral treatment and associated longer survival, the population of people living with HIV (PLWH) is aging. Understanding the factors that affect not only the length of life, but also the quality of life (QoL), is important in this aging population.

There is little published research on the relationship between race and QoL among older PLWH. To address this knowledge gap, this analysis uses data from the Aging with Dignity, Health, Optimism and Community (ADHOC) online registry to identify the different challenges faced by older white/Caucasian (“white”) and black/African American (“black”) gay or bisexual men living with HIV, and to assess differences in total QoL between the two groups.

METHODS

ADHOC is an observational disease registry that has three main goals: (1) to research how HIV impacts the aging process, (2) to improve clinical care, and (3) to create community by connecting patients to one another using a secure, online environment. The data collected through this registry is self-reported and includes information on sociodemographic characteristics, activities and interests, HIV diagnosis and status, health care use and satisfaction, antiretroviral therapy, comorbid medical conditions, health and well-being, substance use, and sexual practices. Where appropriate, various validated PROs are used. To date, participants have been identified and recruited by medical providers specializing in HIV care from a total of 10 sites in CA, IL, Washington DC, FL, NC, TX, WA, and WI.

QoL was measured using the PozQoL, a validated instrument for PLWH (3). Student’s t-tests and chi-squared tests were used to identify disparities between black and white gay or bisexual men. Factors with $p < 0.05$ were used as control variables in a multivariable linear regression model where PozQoL total score was the dependent variable.

RESULTS

Among males in the ADHOC registry, 9% (n=65) of respondents were black and 91% (n=664) were white. Both black men (BM) and white men (WM) had a median age of 59 years. Of the characteristics evaluated, compared to WM, BM were less likely to have a college or graduate degree (42% vs 59%, $p=0.034$), more likely to be single (74% vs 51%, $p<0.001$), less likely to have an income greater than \$50,000 (25% vs 56%, $p<0.001$), and less likely to be virally suppressed (87% vs 96%, $p=0.001$) (Table 1). There were no statistically significant differences between BM and WM with regard to work status, number of sexual partners, anxiety, depression, number of co-morbid conditions, having an AIDS defining illness, number of non-HIV medications, ART adherence, alcohol use, drug use, tobacco use, resilience, interpersonal support, social well-being, HIV-related stigma, or loneliness.

After controlling for relationship status, education level, income, and HIV suppression in the multivariable model, BM had significantly higher total QoL than WM (Table 2).

CONCLUSION

In this analysis, there were substantial differences between older BM and WM living with HIV. After controlling for sociodemographic and clinical differences, BM still reported higher QoL than WM. Programs designed to improve QoL for older gay and bisexual BM and WM living with HIV should take into consideration the unique strengths and challenges faced by each group.

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Table 1. Statistically significant differences between black and white, gay and bisexual men in ADHOC (n=729)

Characteristic	Black Men (n = 65), Number (%) of cases	White Men (n = 664), Number (%) of cases	χ^2 p value
Education Level			0.034
Less than college	38 (58)	273 (41)	
College graduate	16 (25)	252 (38)	
Graduate degree	11 (17)	139 (21)	
Relationship Status			< 0.001
Single/divorced/widowed	48 (74)	338 (51)	
In a relationship	17 (26)	326 (49)	
Income			< 0.001
Less than \$50,000	45 (75)	272 (44)	
More than \$50,000	15 (25)	343 (56)	
Viral Load			< 0.001
Detectable	8 (13)	28 (4)	
Undetectable	55 (87)	633 (96)	

Table 2. Multivariable linear regression shows higher total quality of life scores for black men vs. white men in ADHOC (n = 671)

Variable	β	95% C.I.	P-value
Race (white males vs. black males)	-0.46	-0.65 -0.28	<0.001
Single	-0.21	-0.32 -0.10	<0.001
College degree or more	-0.06	-0.17 0.041	0.234
Income more than \$50,000	0.27	0.16 0.38	<0.001
Virally suppressed	0.31	0.07 0.55	0.013

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