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Loneliness and Health-Related Quality of Life among Women Living with HIV in the United States

Public Health Significance: Health-related quality of life (HRQoL) is an essential measure for assessing patient well-being as well as for monitoring the impact of clinical and other interventions on patient outcomes. Women living with HIV (WLHIV) report lower HRQoL than men living with HIV, but little is known about potential factors that may be associated with quality of life in this population. In this context, loneliness has emerged as a potentially modifiable factor that may impact HRQoL among WLHIV, but these relationships have not been explored for effects over and above known risk factors for lower HRQoL such as depression, substance use, and relationship status.

Methods: Data were analyzed among 1,346 participants from the Women's Interagency HIV Study who completed a six-month study visit occurring between 4/1 - 9/30/2019. Multiple linear regression was used to assess the association between HRQoL and loneliness, adjusting for depression symptoms, relationship status (married or living with a partner), age, race and ethnicity, employment status, substance use (smoking, heavy drinking, substance use), and HIV viral load detectability.

Results: Twenty-five percent of participants reported being lonely. Loneliness was found to be significantly associated with lower HRQoL in the covariate-adjusted model ($F(12,1270) = 69.9, p = .001, R^2 = .39$); with non-lonely participants scoring higher on HRQoL (Mean = 73.1, SD = 19.0) compared to lonely participants (Mean = 54.1, SD = 19.5, $B = 7.3, t(1229) = 6.03, p < .001$).

Conclusion: This research emphasizes the burden of loneliness among persons living with HIV and extends our understanding of the relationship between loneliness and HRQoL identified in previous studies. Future research to examine how to address loneliness within the context of HIV may help advance overall well-being and health in this population.