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HIV viral suppression held constant among in-care clients during COVID-19



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Purpose We assessed early COVID-19 pandemic effects on HIV viral suppression among people in the Miami-Dade County Ryan White Program.

Methods The “Pre-Pandemic” HIV viral load (last measurement during 2019) was compared with the “Pandemic” viral load (last measurement during 2020 that was after March 26) among participants of a telephone survey on HIV care conducted October 2020 to January 2021. Demographic correlates of “Pre-Pandemic” and “Pandemic” viral loads were also compared. Viral loads were obtained from administrative records. Adjusted odds ratios were calculated using logistic regression analysis in SAS.

Results Of 201 participants with viral load tests during both time periods, 177 (88.1%) were suppressed for “Pre-Pandemic” and “Pandemic” tests, 11 (5.5%) were suppressed only for the “Pandemic” test, 8 (4.0%) were suppressed only for the “Pre-Pandemic” test, and 5 (2.5%) were not suppressed at both times. Thus, 6.5% were not virally suppressed for the “Pandemic” test compared with 8.0% for the “Pre-Pandemic” test. In the logistic regression model controlling for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income, and number of children in household, “Pre-Pandemic” viral non-suppression was only significantly associated with Non-Hispanic Black race (adjusted odds ratio 4.25; 95% confidence interval 1.23–18.03). “Pandemic” viral non-suppression was not significantly associated with any demographic factor.

Conclusion During COVID-19, viral suppression remained high among these participants who were in care, possibly due to extensive Ryan White Program adaptations to maintain care and treatment for clients during COVID-19. However, these findings are not generalizable to people who were not in care (Table 1).

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Table 1

Percent Ryan White Program participants not virally suppressed and adjusted odds ratios for lack of viral suppression during pre-pandemic and pandemic time periods, Miami-Dade County

Variable	Total n	Pre-pandemic percent not suppressed)	Pandemic percent not suppressed	Pre-pandemic adjusted odds ratio* (95% confidence interval)	Pandemic adjusted odds ratio* (95% confidence interval)
Total	201	8.0	6.5		
Gender					
Women	109	6.4	7.3	0.56 (0.19–1.60)	1.13 (0.35–3.98)
Men	92	9.8	5.4	Ref	Ref
Race/ethnicity					
Haitian	41	12.2	7.3	3.78 (0.94–17.56)	1.90 (0.39–9.40)
Hispanic	99	3.0	3.0	Ref	Ref
Non-Hispanic Black†	61	13.1	11.5	4.25 (1.23–18.03)	3.39 (0.91–15.24)
Age group (years)					
18–34	24	16.7	16.7	2.29 (0.60–7.81)	3.24 (0.77–12.48)
35 or older	177	6.8	5.1	Ref	Ref
Household income as percentage of Federal Poverty Level					
<100%	81	9.9	9.9	1.23 (0.43–3.47)	1.83 (0.58–6.10)
100–399%	120	6.7	4.2	Ref	Ref
Educational level					
High school graduation or less	116	9.5	9.5	1.36 (0.46–4.45)	3.44 (0.91–19.22)
Some college education	85	5.9	2.4	Ref	Ref
Number of children living in household younger than 18					
0	149	7.4	4.7	Ref	Ref
1 or more	52	9.6	11.5	1.37 (0.40–4.15)	2.69 (0.77–9.21)

* Adjusted odds ratios calculated using Firth's Penalized Likelihood.

† Non-Hispanic Black includes people who classified their race as “Black” and their ethnicity as “Non-Haitian” and “Non-Hispanic.”.