

A Peek Behind the Medical Curtain:

HIV Stigma Among Healthcare and Social Service Providers



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Objectives

- After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to:
 - Explain how providers can unintentionally contribute to HIV stigma
 - Identify the effect of stigma on the HIV care continuum
 - Recognize the effect of stigma on patients

Defining HIV Stigma

...a dynamic process of devaluation that significantly discredits and individual in the eyes of others

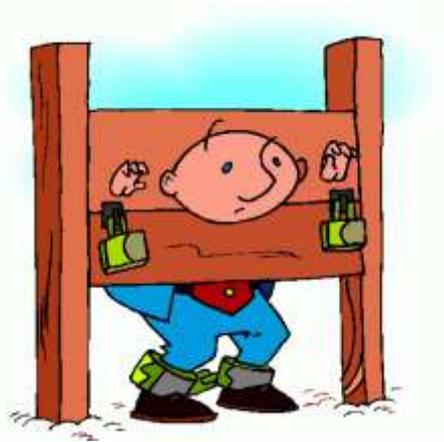


- Lack of understanding
- Misconceptions
- Lack of access to treatment
- Irresponsible media reporting
- Incurability
- Prejudice and fears

HIV Stigma Expressed in Images



HIV Stigma Expressed in Language



Punishment



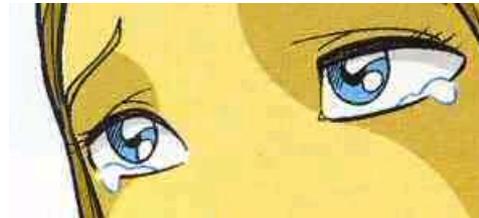
Crime



War



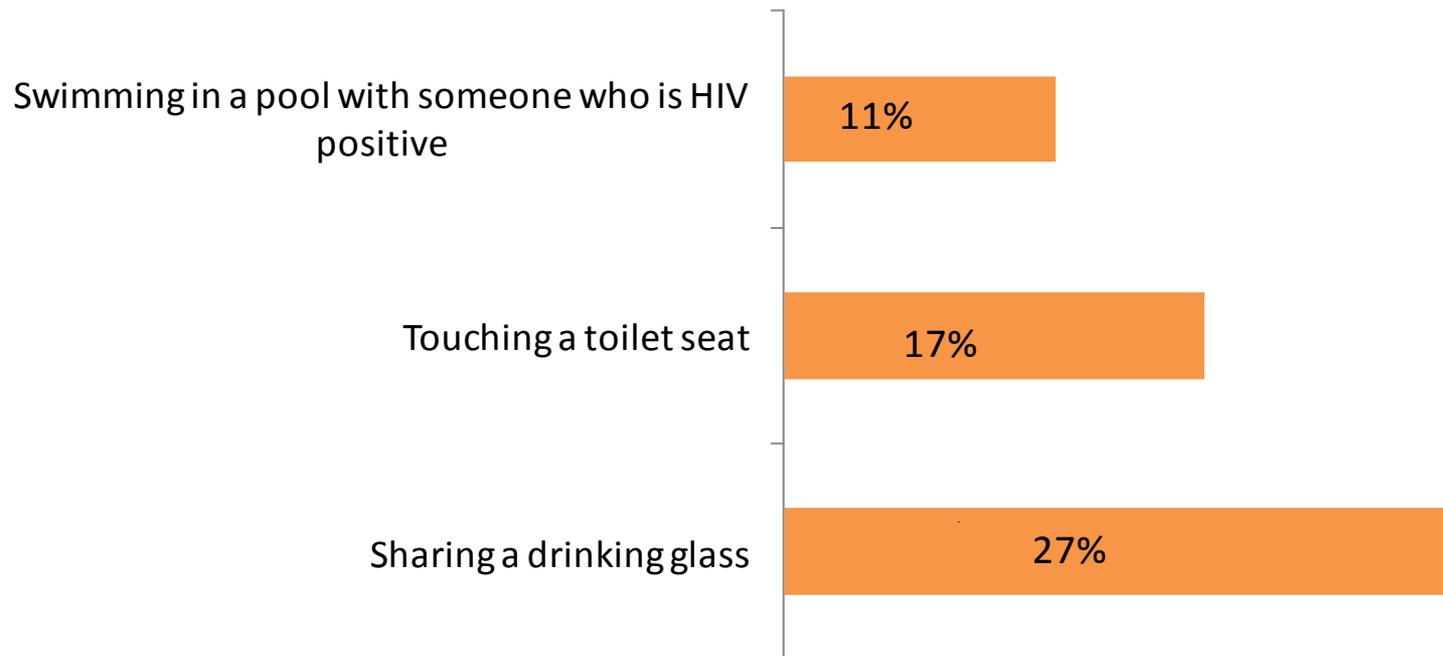
Horror



Otherness

Misconceptions About HIV Transmission

Percent who do not know that HIV **CANNOT** be transmitted by:



The HIV Care Continuum: An Ideal Scenario

IDENTIFICATION

- Prevention messages understood as applying to all populations
- Widespread voluntary testing

- Appropriate counseling services
- Appropriate health care
- HIV no different from other diseases

PREVENTION

- Widespread exposure to people with HIV, helping to normalize the disease
- Planning, reducing vulnerability of affected groups

CARE &
SUPPORT

The HIV Care Continuum: The Effect of Stigma

IDENTIFICATION

- Low perception of risk
- Reluctance to know HIV status
- Increased vulnerability of others

**REDUCING THE EFFICIENCY OF
PREVENTION MESSAGES**

- Inadequate support
- Denial of health care
- Lack of disclosure

REDUCING ACCESS TO SERVICES

PREVENTION

- Stigmatization of behaviors
- Lack of forward planning, resulting in increased vulnerability of affected groups

REDUCING EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION

CARE &
SUPPORT

The Causes of HIV Stigmatization by Service Providers

- Insufficient knowledge and misbelief
- Moral judgments
- Fear of death and disease
- Lack of recognition of stigma



Stigmatizing and Insensitive Language

Use This...

- HIV
- AIDS
- HIV and AIDS
- Unprotected sex
- Safer sex

Not This....

- AIDS virus
- HIV/AIDS
- Promiscuous
- Risky sex
- PLWHA
- AIDS victim

Stigmatizing Behaviors

- Blaming patients who are infected with HIV.
- Poor treatment of patients who belong to stigmatized populations.
- Breaching patient confidentiality.
- Change of body language when staff finds out a patient is HIV infected.
- Excessive or selective use of precautions.



Stigmatizing Beliefs

- Providing services to HIV infected patients is a “waste of time”.
- Working with HIV infected patients is a threat to my safety at work.
- An HIV+ woman should disclose to her partner as soon as she is given her diagnosis.
- HIV+ women should not have children.
- CPS should be contacted if a mother is HIV+.

HIV Stigma in Health Care

- Skilled Nursing Facility

46%--No

18%--Unclear

- Many gave no justification
- Never accepted HIV infected patients before
- Inadequate training of staff
- No isolation rooms
- No protocol or procedures in place

HIV Stigma in Health Care

- Plastic Surgery Office

26%--No

8%--Unclear

- Another surgeon is “better”
- No experience with HIV infected patients
- Staff would “revolt”
- Fear of losing malpractice

HIV Stigma in Health Care

- Obstetricians

55%--No

6%--Unclear

- No hesitation in declining care
- Lack of experience
- Belief that “AIDS patients” have to go to the hospital for treatment
- Dismay that the patient planned on continuing the pregnancy

The Effect of HIV Stigma on Patients

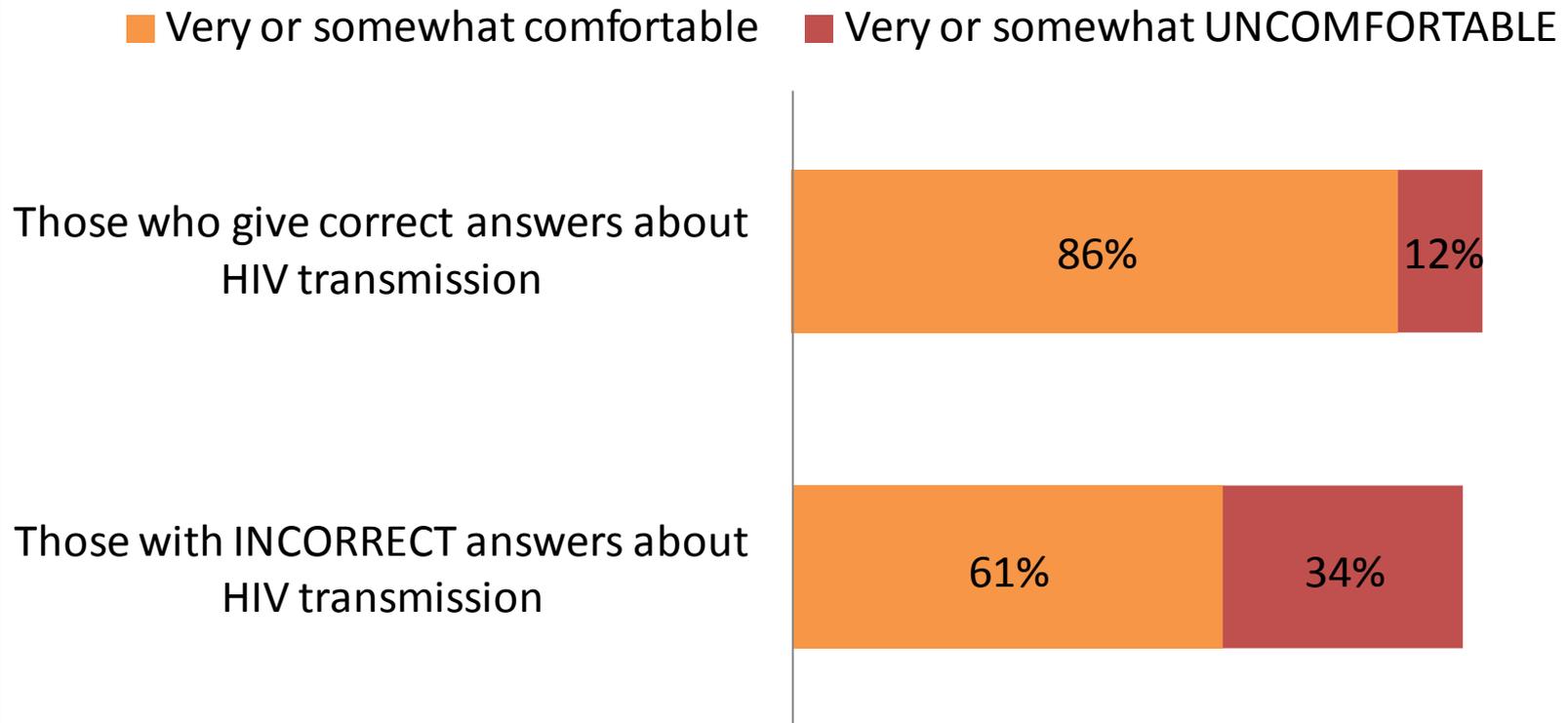
- Psychological suffering
- Reluctance to be tested for HIV
- Decreased utilization of services once diagnosed
- Denial of diagnosis
- Confidentiality and disclosure issues
- Lack of prevention measures to protect others

Providing Appropriate Care

- Put yourself in the patient's shoes
- Set aside personal beliefs
- Understand your community and patients
- Treat HIV infected patients the same as any other
- Provide a nurturing environment
- Use mentors and peers
- Empower your patients and coworkers with knowledge

Relationship Between Stigma and Knowledge

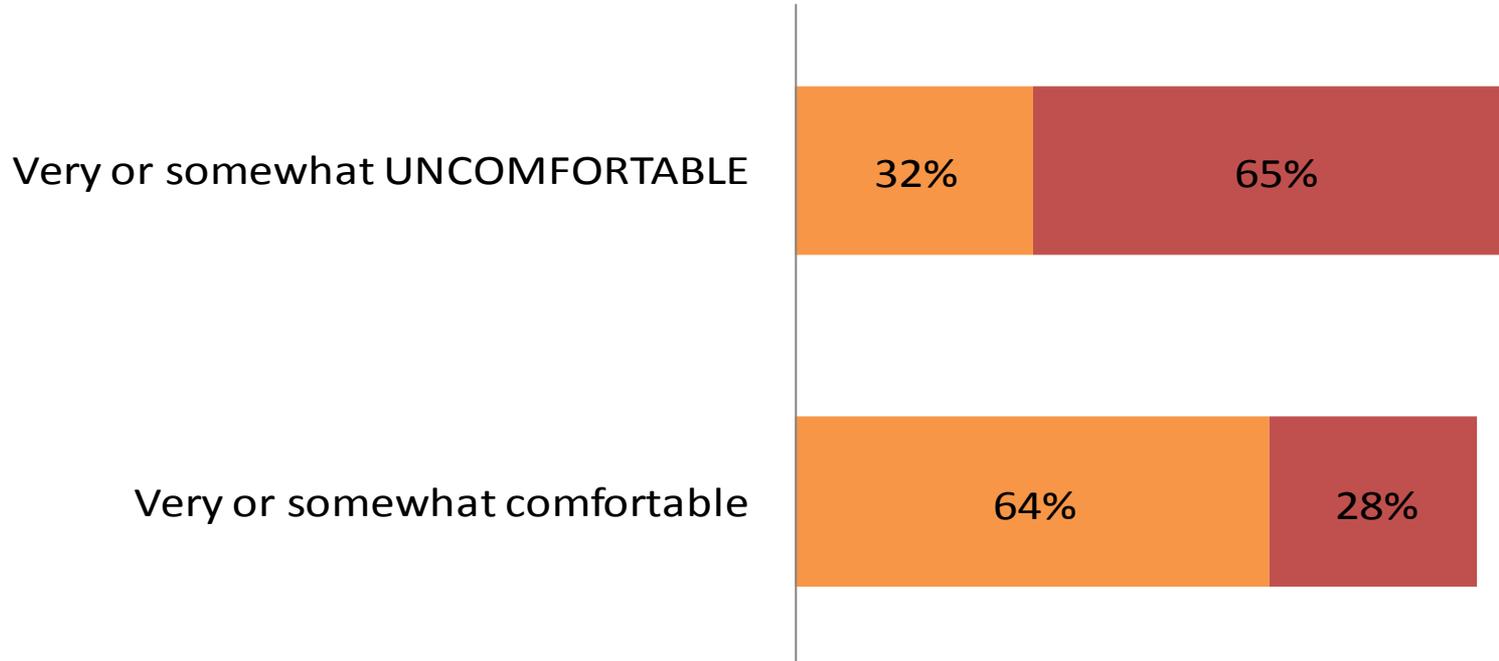
Percent who say they would be comfortable/uncomfortable working with someone with HIV:



Relationship Between Stigma and Knowledge

Percent who say they would be comfortable/uncomfortable having their food prepared by with someone who is HIV positive:

- Those with INCORRECT answers about HIV transmission
- Those who give correct answers about HIV transmission



"AIDS attacks the body.
Prejudice attacks the spirit.
One is caused by a virus.
One is caused by ignorance.
Both can kill."



--New Zealand AIDS Foundation