

## In Ethiopia, HIV disclosure is low

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In Ethiopia, where more than 1.2 million people are infected with HIV, disclosure of infection by patients is important in the fight against the disease. A new study led by a Brown sociology researcher investigates HIV-positive status disclosure rates among men and women in Africa's second most populous country.

In the December 17 issue of *AIDS Care*, Ayalu Reda, a sociology graduate student, and colleagues from Jimma University in Ethiopia found that among a sample of 1,540 patients receiving antiretroviral treatment in eastern Ethiopia, a majority (66 percent) disclosed their [HIV](#)-positive status to their spouse, while fewer disclosed to [siblings](#) (17 percent) and other relatives (16.8 percent). A small number of patients (11.6 percent) did not disclose their [infection](#) status at all. None of the patients had disclosed to all of their family members. Unmarried and illiterate patients had higher levels of nondisclosure.

Reda said he was prompted to conduct the study after working in Ethiopian hospitals and seeing many patients refuse to use local medical centers, opting to be treated farther from home. "We suspected that this may be related to the fact that patients did not disclose their infection status to family members and did not want to risk being seen taking medications in nearby centers," Reda said.

This study's low disclosure rates confirmed his suspicions, highlighting a lack of awareness about the virus and a pervasive stigma surrounding those who are infected. "This will create significant obstacles to the life-long treatment process and the prevention of the spread of the virus. It

may also increase [drug resistance](#). Concerted counseling efforts need to be instituted to create a supportive environment whereby [patients](#) could successfully disclose their infection without fear of discrimination," Reda said.

In addition to Reda, other authors on the paper were Sibhatu Biadgilign, Kebede Deribe and Amare Deribew from the College of Medical and Health Sciences at Jimma University, Ethiopia.

Provided by Brown University

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