

# Having a job helps women with HIV manage their illness, according to new research

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(Medical Xpress)—Having a job helps women with HIV manage their illnesses, according to researchers from Case Western Reserve University and the University of California at San Francisco.

The routine of a work schedule, plus the job-related [money](#) and benefits, provides extra [emotional support](#) for these [women](#), said Allison Webel, assistant professor of nursing at Case Western Reserve University's Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing and the study's lead author.

Findings in the National Institutes of Health-supported study were published this month in *Social Science & Medicine*.

The positive effect of work for women with HIV was based on surveying 260 participants about their social resources. The respondents had an average age of 46, many were mothers, and African American. The researchers, who do not know why, also found African Americans were better able to self-manage the daily disease-related tasks than women from other ethnic groups.

Self-management is a series of daily tasks, from taking medications, exercising and eating right to marshaling support when needed and keeping doctor appointments.

According the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 25 percent of the HIV population nationally (50 percent worldwide) are women.

Many have limited financial means and live in poverty or are homeless, making it difficult to maintain their medications and keep health appointments that keep them healthy, Webel said.

But Webel explained that women who juggle many different responsibilities may find it hard to maintain a health routine but for those who do maintain one increase their chances of living a normal life span.

In the past, many women left [jobs](#) to battle HIV and take care of their health. Current HIV antiretroviral therapies play an important role in preventing the [illness](#) from developing into AIDS and may help delay HIV-related illnesses, such as cancer, heart disease and liver infections.

"Women want to work and now find they can and live well with HIV," Webel said.

The researchers found that work offers these women the positive psychological effect of contributing to the world outside their homes. Obviously, having a job also increases family income and can provide much-needed benefits.

The researchers found that low incomes and lack of advanced education and training prevent many women from finding gainful employment. The researchers called for more training programs to help these women find and hold jobs.

The researchers also suggested further investigation into establishing microenterprises nationally—small businesses similar to those established in developing countries that provide income for women with HIV to cover such necessities as food and housing.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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