

Collaboration may improve access to HIV testing, primary care

October 1 2019, by Jared Wadley

Getting better access to testing and proper primary care for individuals vulnerable to HIV could be as simple as a telephone call or email among health providers.

Social workers, health educators and other [health providers](#) who receive on-the-job training and engage in collaborative practices are more likely to help patients access HIV testing and [primary care](#), both of which help decrease HIV transmission, according to a new University of Michigan study.

In a [longitudinal study](#), researchers examined the effects of interprofessional collaboration and on-the-job training involving HIV testing and HIV primary care.

Some vulnerable individuals may not seek care because they experience stigma in the health care system, they may distrust health providers, or they may lack information and/or insurance. But with collaborative approaches, health providers can help these individuals, the researchers say.

"Interpersonal collaboration and linkage training can improve the initial steps of the HIV care continuum, HIV testing and primary care, and thus improve viral suppression," said Rogério Pinto, U-M professor of social work and the study's lead author.

The study's sample included 285 New York City providers of social and

[public health services](#) in 34 agencies. They were asked about the number of patients they linked to HIV testing, as well as connecting them to primary care within the last six months.

The findings showed that about one-fourth of providers had not made linkages to HIV testing and primary care. However, 33% reported recent in-agency linkage training to help patients access HIV testing and HIV primary care, and about 30% had linked 20 or more patients to HIV testing or primary care in the previous six months.

The more providers actively engage in linking patients to HIV testing and primary care, the sooner these patients will be able to access medication to combat HIV and achieve viral suppression. Health care administrators might strengthen providers' connections across service settings by providing interagency training to help providers build interprofessional collaboration.

More information: Rogério M. Pinto et al, Interprofessional collaboration improves linkages to primary care: a longitudinal analysis, *AIDS Care* (2019). [DOI: 10.1080/09540121.2019.1668537](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540121.2019.1668537)

Provided by University of Michigan

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