Eliminating Stigma Requires Confronting Discrimination

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Eliminating Stigma

“We are concerned about the constant use of federal funds to support this most notorious expression of segregation. Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman because it often results in physical death.

“I see no alternative to direct action and creative nonviolence to raise the conscience of the nation.”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. March 25, 1966
Stigma, Discrimination, and HIV

Stigma is derived from the Greek word *stigmatos*

A mark made by a pointed or sharp instrument, a dot or burn on the skin by a hot iron. A physical mark which causes others to be embarrassed if seen with a person bearing that mark.

- Perception issues that increase the stigma of HIV:
  - Someone is to blame for the “illness”
  - If I am associated with an individual, it may bring harm or shame to me
  - Perception that they are “contagious”


Stigma, Discrimination, and HIV Outcomes

- Unmet prevention needs
- Nondisclosure of HIV status
- Reluctance to test or treat
- Risky behavior
- Delayed initiation of care
- Poorer medication adherence
Stigma, Discrimination, and HIV Outcomes

The intersection of multiple social inequalities is associated with late HIV diagnosis and delayed medical treatment

• Stigma and discrimination compromise quality of life among people living with HIV

• HIV-related stigma, racial discrimination and gender discrimination are correlated

• Stigma (HIV, gender-related) reduced mental health-related quality of life (QoL)

• Social support mediated the stigma and mental health-related QoL relationship

• Poverty mediated associations exist between stigma and physical health-related QoL
Recognizing and Removing Stigmatizing Barriers: Lessons from Experience

Addressing stigma requires addressing both:

General HIV stigma
Population-specific issues

How Do We Eliminate Stigma?
Eliminate Discrimination!

- Structure of the Healthcare System, Policies and Distribution of Federal Funds perpetuate racism and disparities in clinical outcomes among minority populations. Who’s making the decisions?

- Be aware of your attitudes and behavior
- Be inclusive
- Be mindful of your language
- Be the leader in educating your staff and co-workers