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Perceptions and Health Care Needs of HIV-Positive Mothers in India

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What is the Purpose of the Study?

- To explore the perceptions and experiences of a group of community-based, HIV-positive mothers living in India to learn about the challenges they face in terms of assessing health care services and dealing with mental health stressors, stigma, and parenting while ill.
- To allow the women to express their suggestions for designing future intervention programs for women like themselves.

What Is the Problem?

- An estimated 2.5 million Indians currently live with HIV/AIDS.
- The epidemic is shifting toward women. Spread primarily through heterosexual contact, 29% of women are currently infected, with still more cases going unreported.
- As the primary caregivers for their families, women face many challenges when it comes to accessing care; these include dealing with discrimination from family, community, and health care providers, and a general lack of education, social support, and nutrition guidance and sustenance.

What Are the Findings?

- Women described challenges they face on a day-to-day basis, living with HIV. They also described factors that prevent or help them to seek, obtain, and maintain care.
- The women offered suggestions as to how health care providers can assist them better in the future and made recommendations for intervention plans, which included counseling, nutritional support, psychological support, and educational services.

Who Should Care Most?

- Hospitals, primary health centers, and sexually transmitted disease clinics throughout India.
- Physicians, medical officers, and HIV counselors.
- University faculty and educators who are responsible for training medical and nursing staff who provide care to HIV-infected individuals.

Recommendations for Action

- Improved HIV education should be provided to physicians and other health care providers.
- HIV education should be available for mothers living with HIV, their families and friends.
- Educational sessions should be incorporated into support groups.
- Nutritional support should be available.
- Support groups should be offered.
- Medication and other services should be easily accessible and provided at low or no cost.
- Health care providers should assist mothers living with HIV with respect to disclosure issues.
- All health care services should be available in a central setting.

Nyamathi, A., Thomas B., Greengold B., Swaminathan, S. Perceptions and health care needs of HIV-positive mothers in India. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action*. The Community Policy Brief is intended to inform community based organizations, public health policy makers, and other individuals whose primary interest is not research, but who would be interested in the application and translation of research findings for practical purposes.