

HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED PLHIV? A REVIEW OF EVIDENCE FROM THE FIRST 12 MONTHS.

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Background: Early research has focused on the clinical impacts of COVID-19 to determine whether PLHIV are at increased risk of developing complications. However, it is important to not overlook the socially embedded nature of HIV and consider the social impacts of the pandemic on PLHIV.

Methods: We conducted the first scoping review exploring the emerging social impacts of COVID-19 on PLHIV in OECD countries during the first 12 months of the pandemic. The review was conducted in two phases: a global mapping of literature examining COVID-19 and HIV and an in-depth investigation of literature exploring the social impacts of the COVID-19 on PLHIV.

Results: Over 400 papers were published in the first 12 month of the pandemic - 20 examined the social impact of COVID-19 on PLHIV. Social distancing measures, although vital in curbing the spread of COVID-19, left many PLHIV vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness, with some experiencing increased stress and anxiety around accessing care and contracting COVID-19. The pandemic brought changes to how HIV care and treatment were accessed and exposed the high levels of precarity experienced by many PLHIV. Disruption to financial stability was associated with increased food insecurity and treatment nonadherence. The disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on African American and Latinx PLHIV in the US, brought into sharp focus the racial disparities and social inequities experienced by PLHIV.

Conclusion: This review provides important insight into emerging research examining experiences of parallel pandemics. Many social consequences created or magnified by the pandemic were linked to disruptions in HIV care, which emphasise the importance of maintaining HIV care and outreach, particularly among those most vulnerable to disadvantage. Future research must address these challenges to ensure health professionals, service providers and policy makers are equipped to respond and support health and social care needs of PLHIV.

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