Prevalence, Correlates and Health Impact of Healthcare Provider Counseling About Undetectable Equals Untransmittable (U = U) in Canada

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On December 1, 2018, Canada officially endorsed the Undetectable = Untransmittable (U = U) campaign, becoming the first country in the Americas to do so.

The uptake of the U = U message within clinical settings since then is however unknown.

We analyzed the 2019 Positive Perspectives survey, a web-based, convenience sample of people living with HIV (PLHIV) on treatment, to:

- Assess the percentage told of U = U by their provider in Canada (n = 120) when compared with the U.S. (n = 400)
- Examine how Canadian healthcare providers’ engagement in U = U discussions fitted into their broader community patterns with PLHIV
- Explore associations between U = U discussions and health-related outcomes.

Statistical comparisons were done with chi-squared tests and associations measured using prevalence ratios.

The continued support of initiatives like the Undetectable = Untransmittable campaign are critical to ending HIV-related stigma.

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Health
Perceptions related to HIV transmission and sexual health, Canada vs U.S.

Perceived comfort discussing with providers how to prevent HIV transmission as well as several other perceptions regarding HIV transmission did not differ between in Canada and U.S.

However, participants in Canada reported significantly lower prevalence for having discussed U=U with their provider, and the belief antiretrovirals prevent transmission.

‡ p < 0.05

- Canada (n = 120)
- USA (n = 400)

Having children considered a priority when they started treatment
- Canada 10%
- USA 15%

Have ever refused to share their HIV status for fear of romantic discrimination
- Canada 28%
- USA 29%

 Reported optimal sexual health
- Canada 30%
- USA 39%

Preventing HIV transmission to a partner considered a priority when they started treatment
- Canada 43%
- USA 42%

Are comfortable discussing with their HCP how to prevent HIV transmission
- Canada 49%
- USA 55%

Believe that HIV medicines can prevent HIV transmission
- Canada 51%
- USA 68%

Have been told by their HCP that "Undetectable = Untransmittable" (U = U)
- Canada 71%
- USA 71%

- Muchenje et al. CAHR 2021; Virtual. Slides 58.
Greater U=U exposure was observed among participants reporting vs not reporting that their providers: asked if they had treatment concerns, discussed new available treatments and sought their view before prescribing.

No significant differences in U=U discussion within Canada were observed by age, gender, sexual orientation, or HIV duration.
In summary...

**U=U** is an important and empowering message for PLHIV, and discussions about **U=U** initiated by health care providers are beneficial for effective HIV prevention and care.

**U=U** discussions were significantly associated with positive health outcomes. **U=U** discussions were more common among those reporting other indicators of healthy communication with providers.

Given its association with multiple facets of health and well-being, **U=U** should be prioritized in patient-provider communication.

**Associations between U = U message and health-related outcomes, Canada (n = 120)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health-related outcomes</th>
<th>Adjusted prevalence ratios (95% CI)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimal physical health</td>
<td>2.41 [1.42-4.09] ✫</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimal sexual health</td>
<td>1.70 [0.95-3.05]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment satisfaction</td>
<td>1.57 [1.12-2.20] ✫</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimal adherence</td>
<td>1.52 [1.01-2.27] ✫</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimal mental health</td>
<td>1.40 [0.90-2.18]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimal overall health</td>
<td>1.37 [0.93-2.02]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Analyses controlled for age, gender, and duration of HIV*  

**Note:** adjusted for age, gender, and duration of HIV.

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