The Prevalence of Serodiscordant Couples and the Knowledge of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Amongst People Living with HIV (PLHIV) within an Urban Specialty Clinic in Jamaica

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Introduction
HIV serodiscordant couples represent an important target population for HIV prevention. In serodiscordant couples, only one partner is HIV positive while the other is HIV negative. There is currently a lack of data regarding the prevalence of serodiscordant couples in Jamaica. Additionally, knowledge and awareness of PrEP for this population has not been well studied in the region.

Aim
The goal of this study was to determine the prevalence of serodiscordant couples among people living with HIV (PLHIV) at an urban specialty clinic in Jamaica. Although little is known about the level of knowledge and awareness of PrEP as a prevention tool among this population.

Methods and Materials
We conducted a single center cross-sectional cohort pilot study on 60 men and women who were consecutively seen at the Centre for HIV/AIDS Research and Education Services (C.H.A.R.E.S) in Jamaica between March 2017 and April 2017. All participants were registered patients of C.H.A.R.E.S and had documented HIV-1 infection. Data was gathered from patients’ responses, so there exists the potential for bias and under-reporting. Characteristics of our study population were validated by using descriptive statistics. Chi square test was applied to compare categorical variables. A significance level of P<0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results
Of the 60 participants, 37 were currently in a relationship. Mean age was 46.5 years (SD 8.5). Male and female participants were evenly distributed (67% and 33% respectively). 65% of participants indicated being in a serodiscordant relationship. Gender did not significantly impact whether participants were in a serodiscordant relationship. Of the participants that indicated being in a serodiscordant relationship, there was no overall difference in rates between those who were of reproductive age (77.5% versus 22.5% (P=0.233)). However, significantly more persons of reproductive age disclosed their HIV status to their partner than those who were not of reproductive age (77.5% versus 22.5% (P=0.005)).

The majority of participants indicated being in a serodiscordant relationship (85%). 35% had no knowledge of PrEP. Of those who were aware of PrEP, the majority (75%) knew they could benefit from it. Knowledge and awareness of PrEP is important for this population to be successful.

Conclusions
In this preliminary study, at an urban specialty clinic in Jamaica, the majority of study participants were in a serodiscordant relationship. Of those, 41% were unaware of PrEP and its benefits. Further research and education is warranted among patients and providers to efforts to prevent new HIV infections in the region to be successful.