

Positive Health & Support Study: Exploring the meaning of viral suppression with LGBT individuals living with HIV/AIDS

Andrew R. Spieldenner, PhD

Department of Rhetoric

3-5955

andrew.spieldenner@hofstra.edu

Abstract

Viral suppression has emerged as a key means of reducing HIV infections globally. Viral suppression is contingent on people living with HIV/AIDS engaging medical care and treatment, including being adherent to medication. Effective access and maintenance of HIV care is impacted on three levels: 1) social norms and supports (e.g. stigma, value on treatment, HIV disclosure), 2) structural issues (e.g. the quality of the clinical care, the availability of the care, the cost of treatment), and 3) individual issues (e.g. substance use, commercial sex work, homelessness). This qualitative study consisted of thirty-three (33) in-depth interviews with people living with HIV on a variety of topics related to care, treatment and social support. Major themes include: what makes a “good doctor”; mistrust of health department; differences between “HIV-positive identity” and those who “happened to have HIV”; and activism as a form of social support.