

# Empowering and enhancing self-disclosure of HIV-related information to sexual partners with the patient portal: A qualitative study among youth living with HIV

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## BACKGROUND

- ✓ Self-disclosure of HIV to sexual partners is often a source of HIV-related stigma.
- ✓ Eliminating stigma is fundamental to achieving the U.S. Ending the HIV Epidemic in the United States (EHE) goals.
- ✓ Individual-level awareness that people with HIV who have an undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit HIV reduces anticipated HIV stigma
- ✓ Using patient portals to self-disclose an undetectable HIV viral load may support EHE goals

## STUDY OBJECTIVE

To investigate perceptions about using the patient portal to self-disclose HIV-related information to sexual and romantic partners among youth living with HIV (YHIV)

## METHODS

- ✓ The eSHINE II study is a qualitative investigation among YHIV focused on the use of patient portals for HIV care
- ✓ Eligible participants were patients ages 13 to 25 years at an U.S. academic health center
- ✓ 45-to-60-minute virtual in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted via Zoom
- ✓ Participants received a USD \$65 Visa gift card
- ✓ Participants were asked to discuss perceptions about using the patient portal to self-disclose HIV-related information to sexual and romantic partners
- ✓ IDIs were transcribed verbatim and inductively coded during thematic analysis

## RESULTS

- ✓ Sixteen YHIV consented and completed IDIs between May 2022 and March 2023
- ✓ Two major themes emerged: (1) Relative Advantage and (2) Caution.
- ✓ Within themes there were 5 salient codes:
  - (A) Opportunities for HIV Education, i.e., beliefs that information in portals may be used to educate partners about HIV;
  - (B) Demonstrating Personal Accountability, i.e., shows partner that the patient well-manages HIV medication adherence;
  - (C) Allaying Concerns of Transmission, i.e., assures partners that the risk of HIV acquisition is inhibited when viral load is below threshold;
  - (D) Validating Self-Disclosed Information, i.e., adding assurance to the HIV-related information disclosed to a partner;
  - (E) Preserving Privacy, i.e., a desire to keep information about HIV infection undisclosed to partners.

## RESULTS

THEMES | **Codes** | "Quotations"

### PERCEIVED ADVANTAGE

#### A. Opportunities for HIV Education

*"If I show someone my viral load like we were just talking about, if I explain to them what would happen if that number went upwards, past the boundary lines. [...] Show them how the medication would work and whatnot. That would probably be a good thing. Because you're literally educating them through visual learning."*

—Male, 22 years old

#### B. Demonstrating Personal Accountability

*"[...] every time I get a checkup or something, I would just update, show my boyfriend. This is where I'm at, I'm healthy, I'm good. No worries, I'm staying on top of my meds, my viral load is good. Everything is good."*

—Female, 22 years old

#### C. Allaying Concerns of Transmission

*"[...] they can be able to show their partner and comfort their partner, ensuring their partner that they're safe as well, that they're safe with that person."*

—Female, 21 years old

### PERCEIVED ADVANTAGE

#### D. Validating Self-Disclosed Information

*"See, that'd be perfect for them to be like: 'Hey, these are my situation. Oh, you think I'm lying? I got proof.' I think that's perfect. I got the proof right here. [...] I'm not going to lie to you. You can read it all for yourself. Now, if you don't understand it, I'll try my best to help you understand it."*

—Male, 25 years old

### CAUTION

#### E. Preserving Privacy

*"I wouldn't use it for that purpose. I feel like that's just very personal for now, that's very personal to me. But maybe later down the line, I might change my mind. But for right now, I personally would not do that. I'm a very private person, even with my parents, when it comes to stuff like that."*

—Female, 16 years old

## CONCLUSIONS

- Self-disclosure is core to HIV prevention, but it is inhibited by stigma.
- YHIV support using patient portals to reverse the stigma anticipated with HIV self-disclosure, by better equipping them to educate partners about HIV, HIV care, and to disclose undetectable viral loads.
- YHIV desiring to keep HIV information undisclosed to partners may need support to successfully navigate conversations where partners are requesting to view HIV related information from their portal
- To achieve EHE goals, research on practical and effective strategies for safely engaging in disclosure, such as using patient portals to share undetectable HIV viral load results or use of prescribed ART are warranted.

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