Unmet Needs and Barriers to Care Services Among HIV-Positive Persons Who Inject Drugs

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Background

- HIV-positive persons who inject drugs (PWID) have poorer clinical outcomes compared with other persons
- Limited access to medical care services may be a contributing factor
- Data on use of and barriers to services can inform interventions intended to improve access to care, but estimates are lacking

We report nationally representative estimates on use of, need for, and barriers to services among HIV-positive PWID.

Methods

Data source:

- **Medical Monitoring Project**, a national surveillance system that reports representative estimates of characteristics among adults with diagnosed HIV
- Time frame: June 2015–May 2018
- Interview data for the past 12 months
  - –Injection drug use
  - –Use of and need for specific ancillary care services (e.g., dental care, HIV case management)
  - –Barriers to care services

Analytic methods:

- **Unmet need** defined as needing but not receiving care services
- Among persons who injected drugs (N=340), we reported the proportion of persons who: (1) received services, and (2) had an unmet need for services
- Among persons with unmet needs, we assessed barriers to care for individual care services
- We reported weighted percentages to account for complex sample survey design

Results

79% of HIV-positive PWID had ≥1 unmet need for care services, including:

– Dental care (38%)

– Drug/alcohol treatment (20%)

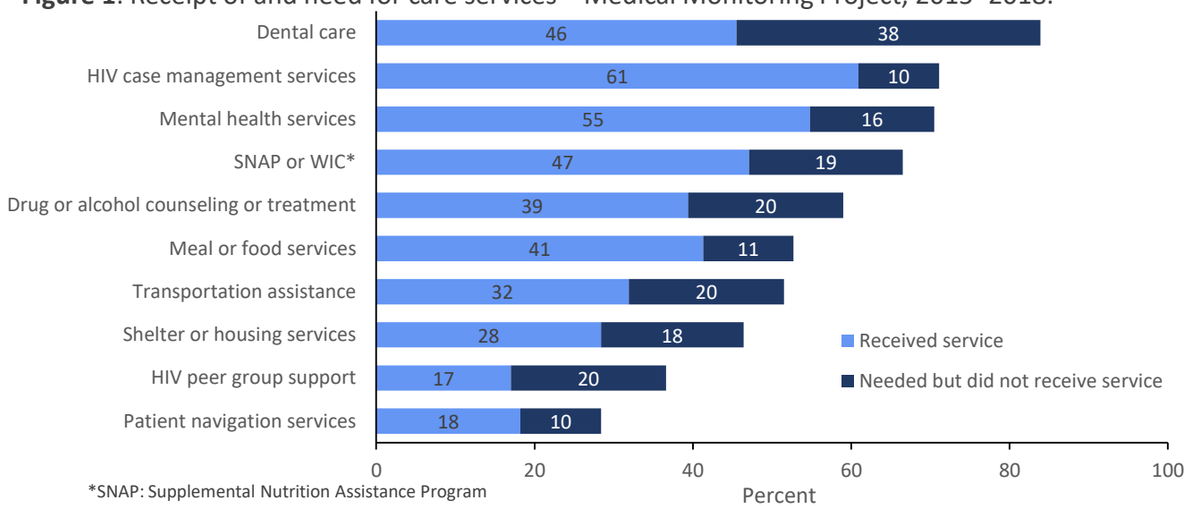
– Transportation assistance (20%)

– HIV peer support group (20%)

Barriers to care varied by service type

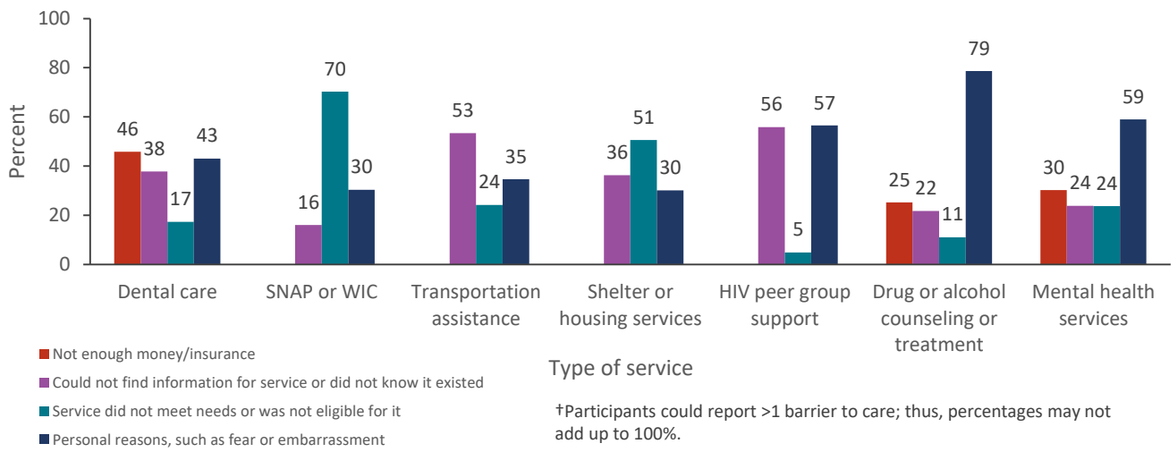
Personal reasons, such as fear or embarrassment, were a substantial barrier to receiving drug/alcohol treatment and mental health services

Figure 1. Receipt of and need for care services—Medical Monitoring Project, 2015–2018.



*SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
WIC: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

Figure 2. Barriers to care services—Medical Monitoring Project, 2015–2018.†



†Participants could report >1 barrier to care; thus, percentages may not add up to 100%.

Conclusions

- Nearly 4 in 5 HIV-positive PWID had at least one unmet need for care services
- Most prevalent unmet needs were for dental care, drug/alcohol treatment, transportation assistance, and HIV peer support group
- Addressing barriers to receiving services may help improve ART adherence and viral suppression among HIV-positive PWID

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