

Publication

A question module for assessing community stigma towards hiv in rural India

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Summary This paper describes a simple question module to assess community stigma in rural India. Fear of stigma is known to prevent people from seeking HIV testing and to contribute to further disease transmission, yet relatively little attention has been paid to community stigma and ways of measuring it. The module, based on a vignette of a fictional HIV-positive woman, was administered to 494 married women and 186 unmarried male and female adolescents in a village in rural Maharashtra, India. To consider the usefulness of the question module, a series of hypotheses were developed based on the correlations found in other studies between HIV-related stigma and socio-demographic characteristics (age, education, discussion of HIV with others, knowing someone living with HIV, knowledge about its transmission and whether respondents acknowledged stigmatizing attitudes as their own or attributed them to others). Many of the study's hypotheses were confirmed. Among married women, correlates of stigma included older age, lack of discussion of HIV and lack of knowledge about transmission; among adolescents, lower education and lack of discussion of HIV were the most significant correlates. The paper concludes that the question module is a useful tool for investigating the impact of interventions to reduce stigma and augment social support for people living with HIV in rural India.

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