

## Knowledge of STIs and HIV among people with and without HIV : where are we now?

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### ❖ Background

Poor knowledge of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV among people living with HIV (PWH) could result in a worsening in quality of life. We aimed to investigate the knowledge of STIs prevention, transmission and awareness regarding living with HIV and the U=U campaign, among PWH compared to people without HIV (PWoH).

### ❖ Materials and Methods

We proposed a questionnaire regarding STIs and HIV to PWH attending eight outpatient clinics for Infectious Diseases in Italy. The same questionnaire was administered to PWoH. We collected demographical data, and matched participants 1:2 by age, gender, and level of education.

We assigned 1 point to correct, 0.5 point to partially correct, and 0 point to wrong answers.

Additional questions regarding disclosure and U=U campaign were proposed to PWH.

Differences among two groups were evaluated using Student's t test or Pearson chi-squared test, as appropriate. The statistical significance level was established as  $p < 0.05$ .

### ❖ Results

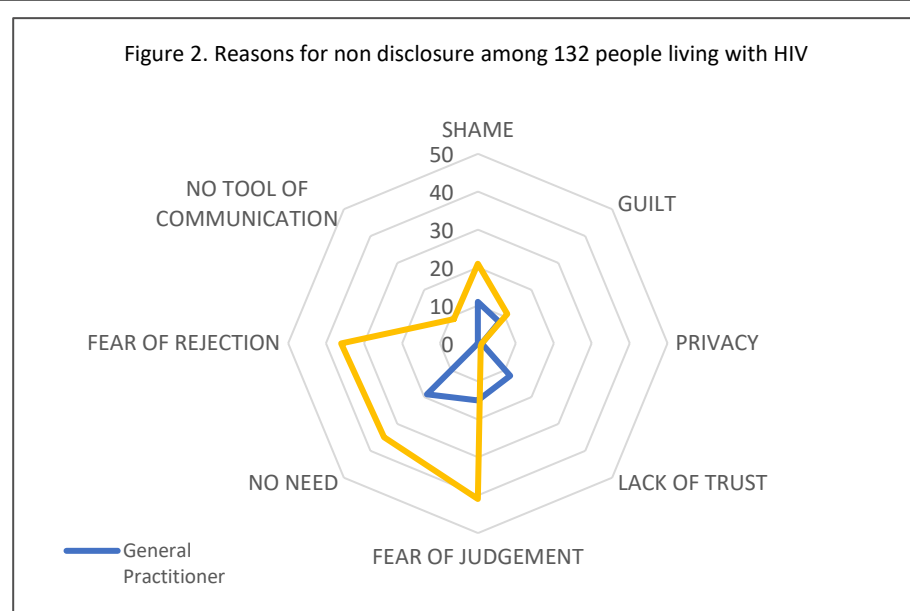
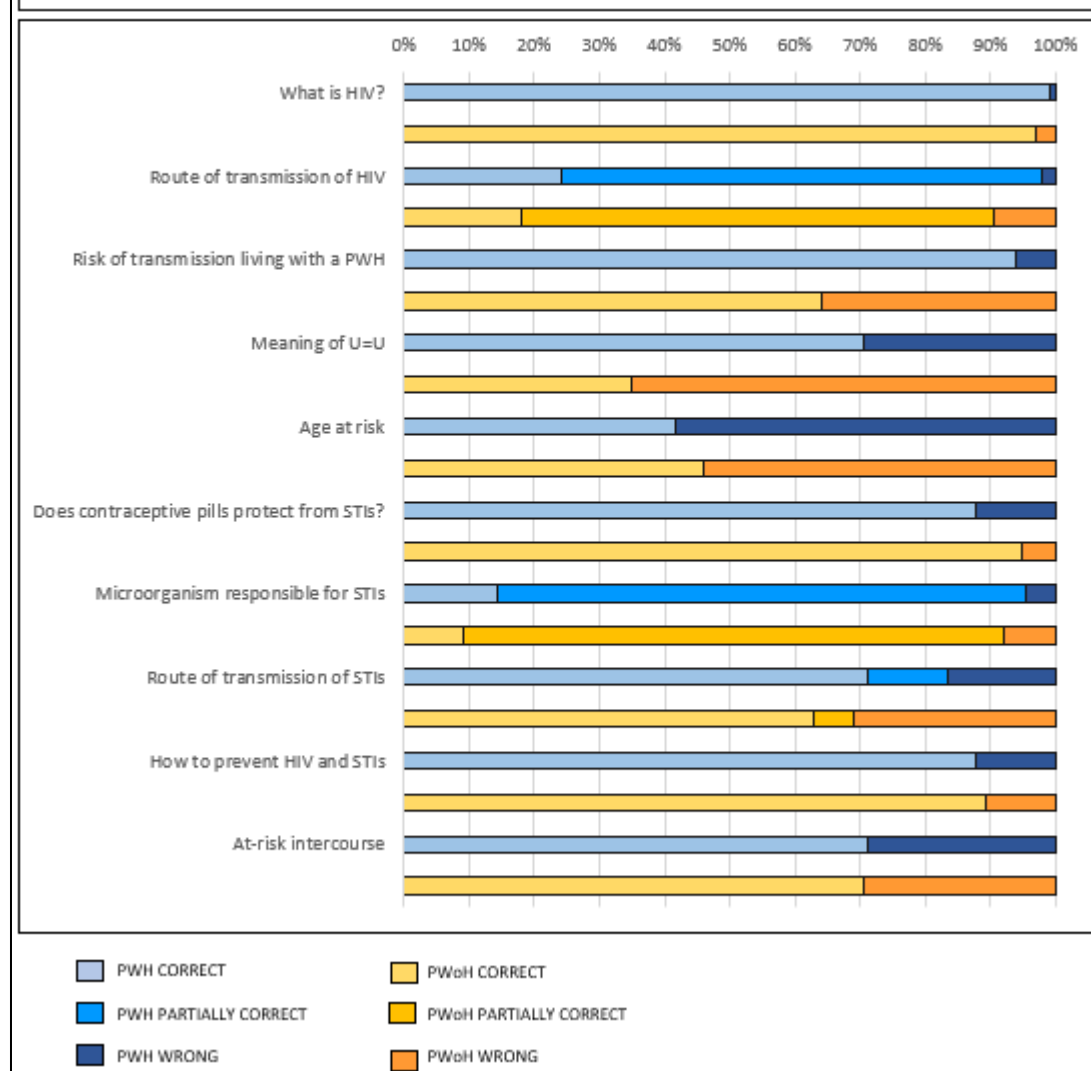
We collected 132 answers from PWH, matched to 264 PWoH. The mean age was  $50.09 \pm 11.11$  years. No differences were present in gender, level of education, or work status, while there was a higher percentage of homosexual and bisexual people among PWH. Overall, PWH scored better than PWoH ( $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, PWH answered significantly better about the route of transmission of HIV ( $p = 0.018$ ) and STIs ( $p = 0.003$ ), the risk of transmission of HIV living with a PWH ( $p < 0.001$ ), and the U=U campaign ( $p < 0.001$ ), while PWoH scored significantly better regarding contraceptive pill as an effective barrier for transmission ( $p = 0.016$ ) (Figure 1).

Regarding HIV-status disclosure, 88/132 (66.7%) declared it to the general practitioner; reasons for non-disclosure were no need, fear of judgment, and lack of trust. Moreover, 109/132 (82.6%) disclosed their status to family, friends, or partners. In this case, fear to be avoided, judged, and no need were reasons for non-disclosure. Of note, 58/132 (43.9%) declared U=U has changed their self-perceptions, bringing back freedom, self-confidence, and "normality".

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Figure 1. Answers from a questionnaire regarding HIV and STIs among people living with HIV (PWH) and people without HIV (PWoH)



### ❖ Conclusions

PWH showed a better knowledge about STIs than PWoH. However, several gaps regarding these topics and U=U campaign still need to be addressed among both populations. Also, more effort is needed to reduce stigma and self-stigma.