

# Harvard study finds substance abuse, mental health problems in MSM interfere with HIV medication adherence

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Men who have sex with men (MSM) account for more than 60% of HIV infections in the U.S. and 78% of new infections in men. Antiretroviral therapy can control HIV infection and suppress viral load, but mental health and substance abuse problems common among MSM can interfere with medication adherence. How conditions such as depression and alcohol and drug abuse can affect anti-HIV therapy and the success of various interventions are explored in an article published in *LGBT Health*.

Jaclyn White, MPH, Janna Gordon, and Matthew

Mimiaga, ScD, MPH, Fenway Health, Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, and Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, MA, review the [mental health problems](#) and specific substances that pose the greatest threat to medication adherence among MSM. Targeted interventions can improve MSM's psychosocial problems while also helping them adhere to their antiretroviral drug regimens. Effective strategies identified through rigorous clinical trials must be translated into clinical practice, suggest the authors in the article "[The Role of Substance Use and Mental Health Problems in Medication Adherence among HIV-Infected MSM.](#)"

"For people living with HIV, the importance of adherence to antiretroviral therapy cannot be over-emphasized," says Editor-in-Chief William Byne, MD, PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY. "It is essential to preventing both the manifestations of infection in the individual and the sexual transmission of the virus to others. In this article, White and colleagues show the importance of addressing mental health and substance use in antiretroviral adherence interventions for MSM."

**More information:** The article is available free on the [LGBT Health](#) website.

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