

# Ageism and Older Adults with HIV: A Source of Health Disparities?

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# What is Ageism?

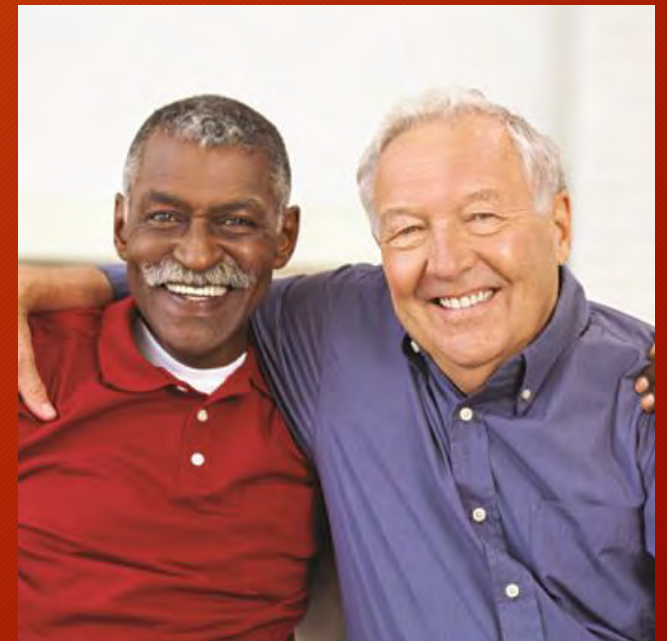


- Prejudice and discrimination on the part of one age group towards another.
- More specifically - prejudice and discrimination against older people.
- Ageism perpetuates the invisibility of older adults, including older adults with HIV.



# Ageism & HIV

- Ageism is perceived by many who are growing older with HIV.
- Enduring perceptions that HIV is a disease of the young only.
- Older adults with HIV feel stigmatized by both HIV infection and age.
- This dual stigmatization may be even more acute for gay and bisexual men due to ageism in the LGBT community.



# Ageism Negatively Affects Health

- Ageism related to depression among gay and bisexual men, including those with HIV.
  - Ageism and Accelerated Aging?
- Becca R. Levy proposed negative internalized age stereotypes impact health through psychological, behavioral, and physiological pathways:
  - Psychological: Negative age expectations related to poorer cognitive test performance.
  - Behavioral: Health practices may be curtailed if believe that age leads to inevitable health problems and decline.
  - Physiological: Internalized negative age stereotypes related to heightened stress response.



# How can we buffer the impact of Ageism for those with HIV?

- Difficult to address ageism at the macro levels of culture and society
- Opportunities exist for health and human service providers to address ageism for HIV-positive or at-risk individuals:
  - *Training of health providers in HIV screening, early diagnosis and initiation of ART in older populations and integration of key services.*
  - *Prevention, education and outreach targeting older adults.*
  - *Treatment guidelines for older individuals with HIV.*
  - *Funding in line with the aging of the epidemic.*
  - *Engagement of communities, CBOs and social service providers in outreach, mental health and social support.*
  - *Addressing the needs of special populations.*

# Conclusions

- With the demographic shift towards older adults in the HIV population globally, and the elusiveness of a cure, addressing the care needs of this aging population are paramount.
- Challenges are exacerbated in LMICs which often lack vital resources to provide clinical and social services for this population.
- The aging of the HIV epidemic will be very challenging, but provides the opportunity to mount a global response that will address the needs of this population across regions and settings.
- This could serve as a model for how we address aging regardless of HIV status.



# Thank You!



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