

# Experiences and Emotional Challenges of Antiretroviral Treatment – Findings from the Positive Perspectives Study

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## Introduction

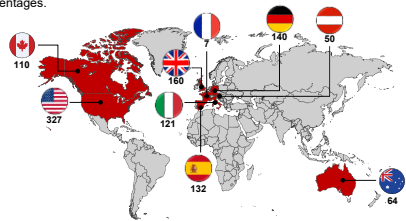
- The Positive Perspectives survey sought to understand the attitudes of a large, diverse group of people living with HIV (PLHIV) towards their diagnosis,<sup>1</sup> experience with stigma,<sup>1</sup> communications with their physician,<sup>2-4</sup> and treatment experience<sup>2-4</sup> to identify the current challenges and unmet needs.

## Objective

- To evaluate the treatment experience and emotional challenges associated with antiretroviral therapy (ART) for PLHIV.

## Methods

- The 2016–2017 Positive Perspectives was an international self-reported survey of PLHIV.
- Snow-ball sampling was used to select 1,111 PLHIV aged >18 years in 9 countries.
- Participants were pre-screened to verify clinical diagnosis of HIV; data were analyzed with percentages.



### • Patient-reported outcomes included the following measures:

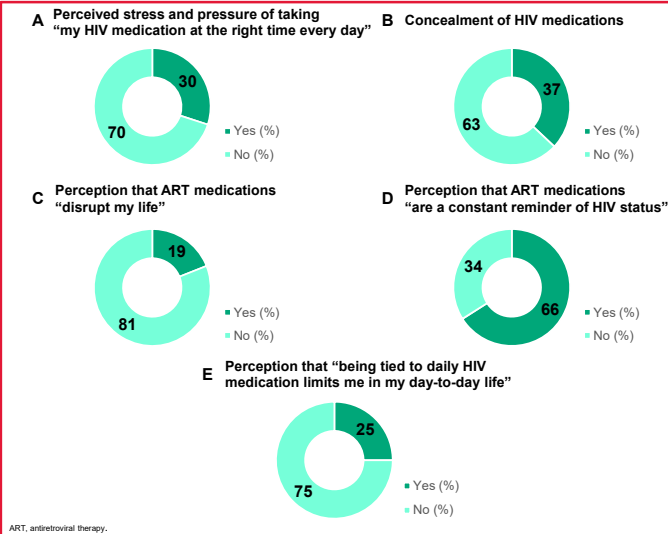
- Satisfaction with “current HIV medication” (Yes = “Very/Quite” satisfied vs. No = “Neither satisfied/dissatisfied,” “Quite/Very” dissatisfied) n=1085.
- Concealment of HIV medication (Yes = Yes “Frequently/Quite often” vs. No = “Yes, occasionally” or “No, never”) n=1085.
- Perception that ART “disrupts their life” (Yes = “Strongly/Somewhat” agree vs. No = “Neither agree/disagree,” “Somewhat/Strongly” disagree) n=1085.
- Perception that ART “is a constant reminder of HIV status” (Yes = “Strongly/Somewhat” agree vs. No = “Neither agree/disagree,” “Somewhat/Strongly” disagree) n=1085.
- Perception that “being tied to my daily HIV medication limits me in my day-to-day life” (Yes = “Strongly/Somewhat” agree vs. No = “Neither agree/disagree,” “Somewhat/Strongly” disagree) n=1085.
- Perceived stress and pressure of taking “my HIV medication at the right time every day” (Yes = “Strongly/Somewhat” agree vs. No = “Neither agree/disagree,” “Somewhat/Strongly” disagree) n=1085.
- Perception toward innovations to HIV medicines (Results of maximum differential scaling to rank the importance of potential improvements in ART, n=1057).

## Results

Table 1: Survey Respondent Characteristics:

	Gender	Age (years)	Time since diagnosis	Currently taking medication
Male	75% (828)	18–34 26% (289)	Pre-2006 49% (549)	Yes 98% (1085)
Female	24% (272)	35–49 41% (451)	2006–2014 40% (443)	No 2% (22)
Transgender	1% (7)	50+ 33% (371)	2015–2016 11% (119)	

Figure 1A–E. Emotional Challenges Associated with HIV Medications



## Subgroup Differences

- Of those PLHIV currently on treatment, the majority (87%) were very or quite satisfied with their current ART.<sup>2,3</sup> Treatment satisfaction was similar by age, gender, and time since diagnosis.
- PLHIV who were “open” (23%, n=325) and not “open” (32%, n=760), those who were younger (37%, n=279), and those recently diagnosed with HIV (41%, n=116) reported perceived stress and pressure of taking their medications at the right time every day.
- Concealing medications was commonly reported among those experiencing stigma (40%, n=890) or a recently emotional impact of HIV (53%, n=335), and by younger patients (52%, n=279) and those recently diagnosed (52%, n=116).
- Feeling that daily medication limited day-to-day life was reported in 23% (n=937) that reported treatment satisfaction, 18% (n=325) who were “open” and 28% (n=760) PLHIV who were not “open” about their HIV status.
- Regardless of age, gender, or time since diagnosis, PLHIV prioritized reducing long-term adverse effects of ART and lowering dosing frequency as the most important areas for improvement to medications.<sup>2</sup>

## Limitations

- The survey sample may not be representative of the PLHIV population within each country/region.
- The questionnaire was only available online, possibly introducing a selection bias of respondents comfortable with this mode of communication.

## Conclusions:

- Many participants reported emotional challenges associated with their daily HIV treatment experience.
- PLHIV considered reduction of long-term adverse effects and dosing frequency important areas for improving ART.

Despite high overall satisfaction with current ART, considerable challenges and daily impact of treatment persist

## Acknowledgments

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