HIV infection among women in Oregon, 2015

Women comprised 836 of the 6,969 Oregon residents living with HIV at the end of 2015. The average age among women living with HIV in Oregon was 47 years (for men, 48 years). The average age of diagnosis for women was 33 years old compared to 35 years of age among men. Oregon residents living with HIV had been diagnosed for an average of 13 years regardless of sex. Successful HIV treatment reduces the number of HIV virus copies in the blood. People are said to have “viral suppression” if the measured number of copies is <200 copies/ml. Among women receiving HIV medical care in Oregon during 2015, 88% were virally suppressed at their last blood test (for men, 90%). Suppressed viral load corresponds to low levels of virus detected in the blood, which cause HIV to be less easily transmitted.

Among female cases living in Oregon at the end of 2015, injection drug use (IDU) was determined to be the most likely route of infection for 23% (188/836) and heterosexual contact for 61% (507/836). “Heterosexual contact” as a category included sex with bisexual men (5%; 43/836), sex with IDU (14%; 115/836), sex with someone who received a transfusion/transplant (1%; 6/836). However, it was not possible to determine how many of the remaining women in this category (41%; 343/836) knew their male partners were HIV-positive or were at high risk of being infected. Many women find out after exposure or diagnosis that their partner was HIV-positive and what their partner’s risk was.

HIV and women facts at a glance

- From 2006 to 2015, the average annual rate of HIV diagnosis among female Black/African Americans was 15 times the rate among Whites (16.8 vs. 1.1 per 100,000).
- From 2006 to 2015, 22% (66/303) of female cases diagnosed among Oregon residents reported past injection drug use.
- Women represented 12% (836/6,969) of the estimated total of people living with HIV/AIDS in Oregon at the end of 2015.
- No child has been born with HIV to an Oregon resident since 2006.

Figure 1  Presumed transmission among female Oregon HIV cases diagnosed, 2006–2015 (n=303)

- 53% Heterosexual
- 23% Injection drug use (IDU)
- 22% Unknown
- 2% Pediatric
Another 14% (114/836) of females fell into an “undetermined transmission” category. This category means they were unsure about who exposed them to HIV or that it was not documented. Vertical transmission from mother to child accounted for 3% (25/836) of diagnoses among females and another two cases reported being infected via transfusion or other blood product. The conclusion is that approximately one-quarter of Oregon female cases were infected by injecting drugs and almost all other women were infected by male partners whose risk the women did not know when they were exposed.

From 2006 to 2015, an average of 30 Oregon resident women (1.6 cases per 100,000 female population) were newly diagnosed with HIV each year. During the same period, the rate of diagnosis was highest among Black or African American women at 16.8 cases per 100,000, a rate 15 times higher than the rate among White women (1.1 per 100,000). Rate of diagnosis among American Indian or Alaska Native women during 2006–2015 was 1.8 cases per 100,000 and 2.6 cases per 100,000 among Hispanic women.

Sixty-seven percent (36/54) of Hispanic women diagnosed from 2006 to 2015 were foreign-born, compared to 71% (36/51) of Black or African American women and 3% (5/172) of White women. The presumed modes of transmission for women between 2006 and 2015 were injection drug use (IDU) for 22% (66/303) of women, heterosexual contact for 53% (161/303), and “undetermined” for 23% (71/303) (Figure 1). Seventy-seven percent (51/66) of female IDU cases were White.

Reproductive health
Fortunately, mother-to-child transmission of HIV during pregnancy or at birth is rare in Oregon. As a result, Oregon does not mandate that pregnancy in an HIV-infected woman be reported to the Oregon Health Authority. At the end of 2015, 14 children aged <10 years with known HIV infection lived in Oregon. All but one were born outside the United States and one — the last known infant born with HIV to an Oregon mother — was born in 2006. During 2013, 95% of birth certificates for Oregon births indicated that the mother had been tested for HIV while she was pregnant.

Epidemiologic resources:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/hiv](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv).

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