

## Stigma and HIV: A Review of Quantitative Empirical Literature

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Stigma associated with HIV/AIDS continues to profoundly affect prevention efforts, leading people to deny risk, avoid testing, and delay treatment. The disease burden for HIV is expected to increase dramatically by the year 2020. The accompanying stigma due to HIV is anticipated to increase proportionally. Individuals with stigmatizing diseases are less likely to seek medical attention, causing higher morbidity and mortality among these silently sick populations, providing communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, a fertile environment in which to spread. Therefore, disease-related stigma has recently been targeted by research to explicate the mechanism by which stigma is implicated in poor health outcomes. However, limited research has focused on this phenomenon, particularly in the HIV/AIDS population. This review examines 26 quantitative empirical studies of HIV+ adults published between 1994 and 2004 in the United States (identified via PsychInfo and Medline). These studies examined seven constructs associated with HIV-related stigma: disclosure (23%), HIV-related symptoms (12%), barriers to health care (8%), daily functioning (4%), psychological functioning (46%), suicidal ideation (8%), and rural residence (4%). Study data were acquired via self-report questionnaires (69%), interviews (31%), and/or structured interviews (8%). Five psychometrically evaluated measures of stigma are identified and discussed. In addition to correlates of HIV-related stigma, intervention studies are also discussed. This review explores contradictory results by examining demographic dimensions such as ethnicity, orientation, and age of participants as well as methodology used in the studies. Heightened stigma perception was found by this review to be clearly associated with various health-related, psychosocial, and demographic factors. Intervention studies that address these factors are essential to reduce the negative impact of HIV-related stigma. Gaps in the literature are identified and future research suggested.