

## **Abstract**

### **Background**

HIV-infected (HIV+) women have high rates of Gender Based Violence (GBV). Studies of GBV find that approximately 50-90% of survivors develop mood and [anxiety disorders](#). Given that women in sub-Saharan African constitute the largest population of HIV+ individuals in the world and the region's high GBV prevalence, mental health research with HIV+ women affected by GBV (HIV+GBV+) in this region is urgently needed.

### **Methods**

Qualitative methods were used to evaluate the mental health care needs of HIV+GBV+ female patients at an HIV clinic in the Kisumu County, Kenya. Thirty in-depth interviews and four focus groups were conducted with patients, healthcare providers and community leaders. Interviews were transcribed, translated and analyzed using qualitative data software.

### **Results**

Respondents stated that physical, sexual and emotional violence against HIV+ women was widely prevalent and perpetrated primarily by untested husbands accusing a wife of marital infidelity following her positive HIV test result. Mental health problems among HIV+GBV+ women included depressive, anxiety, traumatic stress symptoms and suicidal thoughts. Participants opined that [emotional distress](#) from GBV not only caused HIV treatment default, but also led to poor HIV health even if adherent. Respondents agreed that mental health treatment was needed for HIV+GBV+ women; most agreed that the best treatment modality was individual counseling delivered weekly at the HIV clinic.

### **Limitations**

Emotional distress may be higher and/or more varied among HIV+GBV+ women who are not engaged in HIV care.

### **Conclusions**

Mental health care is needed and desired by HIV+GBV+ women in Kisumu County, Kenya.