

## Centre for Health Systems Research & Development

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### Factors associated with healthcare workers' fear of occupationally acquired HIV

#### CITATION

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** A certain level of fear of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection in the workplace is appropriate and promotes correct infection control practices. However, it remains important to allay immoderate levels of fear, as reduced fear leads to a reduced emotional burden on healthcare workers and correlates with a higher quality of care for HIV patients.

**Objective:** The aim of this research was to explore factors associated with healthcare workers' fear of acquiring HIV in the workplace.

**Methods:** In the Free State province of South Africa, a representative sample of 882 healthcare workers from eight hospitals completed self-administered questionnaires on issues related to fear of occupationally acquired HIV, infection control, knowledge and stigma. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and binomial logistic regression.

**Results:** Almost half of the respondents (n = 379; 46.8%) were concerned about HIV infection at work, with clinical professionals being 4.1 times more likely, and support workers 5.5 times more likely, to fear acquiring HIV at work than administration and management staff. Increasing levels of HIV stigma (OR = 1.084, p = 0.003); inadequate supplies of disposable gloves (OR = 2.534, p < 0.001); and fear of occupationally acquired TB (OR = 31.187, p < 0.001) were positively associated with fears of acquiring HIV at work.

**Conclusion:** Healthcare workers continue to fear HIV contagion at work. These fears were more pronounced among those who worked directly with patient care, had been in the profession for a longer period of time, perceived a general climate of HIV stigma in the workplace and where there was a lack of personal protective equipment. An holistic approach is needed to address these fears and should target individuals, the organisation, and policy.

**Keywords:** Occupationally acquired HIV, health care workers, fear