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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RECENT DRINKING AND ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY ADHERENCE AMONG BINATIONAL LATINO PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AT THE US-MEXICO BORDER

Background: Alcohol use among people living with HIV (PLWH) has been linked to suboptimal adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and poor health outcomes. At a population level, this may translate to HIV transmission risk if individual-level viral loads are not suppressed. Drinking behavior is often influenced by cultural norms surrounding alcohol drinking practices and may differ in the U.S-Mexico border region where patterns of substance use may also differ from patterns in each respective country's interior.

Methods: We conducted secondary data analysis with data from a U.S-Mexico binational cross-sectional parent study with a convenience sample of Latino PLWH (N=201) from agencies in San Diego and Tijuana, to elucidate the association between recent alcohol use and ART adherence. We hypothesized that report of recent alcohol consumption (past three months) would be associated with suboptimal ART adherence (self-reported) and differ by environmental/social life-style factors such as primary residence in the past six months (US or Mexico) and cross-border mobility.

Results: Secondary data analysis included a subset of one hundred and eighty-eight (N=188) binational Latino PLWH. Associations between alcohol consumption and ART adherence were determined by logistic regression. Individuals who consumed alcohol were significantly (19%) more likely to miss at least one dose of ART medication in the past month versus those who did not drink (B= 0.745; p=0.037). Overall, 36% of participant who used alcohol while maintaining residence in the US in the last 6 months reported missing ART medication. This was significantly higher (p≤0.001) than the 34% of participants who used alcohol while maintaining residence in Mexico in the last 6 months and reported missing ART medication

Conclusion: From the results, recent residency in the US appears to be associated with low ART adherence among drinkers and in comparison, this suboptimal adherence was significantly less among drinkers maintaining residency in Mexico. Alcohol consumption appears to be related to low ART adherence (missed doses) regardless if participants made round-trip border crossings or not. Our findings eluding significant association between recent alcohol consumption and suboptimal adherence to ART in our Latino PLWH border population merits further study and can inform clinicians to improve communication on alcohol consumption among Latino PLWH before and/or during their engagement in ART.