

Healthcare Across the Border: Stigmatization Experiences and Healthcare-seeking Behavior of Male Expatriates with HIV/AIDS in Thailand

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In ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Thailand is considered as the regions leader with regards to its effective response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In order to understand the epidemic, it is essential to investigate one of its significant drivers: HIV-related stigma and discrimination. Hence, this research study assessed the experiences of stigma and the healthcare-seeking behavior of male expatriates with HIV/AIDS in Thailand. A PLHIV (People Living with HIV) questionnaire was used as the survey tool in this study. The questionnaire focused on three main domains: sociodemographic characteristics, health-related stigma, and disclosure and confidentiality. Health-related stigma targeted three specific forms: anticipated stigma, experienced stigma, and internalized stigma. The methodology of this study is descriptive qualitative and explanatory in describing the stigmatization experiences of the respondents and their healthcare-seeking behavior. Findings suggest that health-related stigma is still persistent, which made the respondents avoid or delay going to a healthcare facility. Specifically, the response categories that were prominent in anticipated stigma include the feeling of not being sick enough, high cost of healthcare services, and the venue of healthcare facilities being near their workplace that induces fear that they might be seen by their colleagues. Internalized stigma was also prominent as majority of the respondents felt guilty and ashamed of their HIV status. The results of the study can be used in the development of programs and interventions that will help reduce the three forms of health-related stigma. It also suggests expatriates as a key affected group in need of intervention.

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