

Depression among HIV-infected women in India

This past summer, Salma Pothiawala, second year student in USF Health's College of Medicine, was awarded the David E. Rogers Fellowship by the New York Academy of Medicine. This fellowship supported her travel to Mumbai, India to collaborate with the Government of Maharashtra in studying depressive symptomatology among HIV-infected women. She shared her recent experience:



Sir JJ Hospital's ART Center in Mumbai, India

The site of my research was Sir JJ Hospital, a government-funded hospital in the heart of Mumbai. The Hospital is a major center in the state of Maharashtra for free antiretroviral treatment (ART) to treat HIV/AIDS. Depression has been linked to HIV since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, but little research has been done correlating the two in developing countries such as India. Equally scant is research targeting HIV-positive women in India, even though they constitute 40% of all reported AIDS

cases in the country and are emerging as the new high-risk group.

My experience in India allowed me to more fully understand transmission dynamics of the virus, as well as personally witness its far-reaching social and psychological impacts. Although my goal was to identify depressive symptomatology among these women, I also saw a strong will to live life and function normally in spite of facing such adversity. I am truly grateful that I was given the opportunity to interact with and learn from this patient population.

My data is currently in the analysis phase, and therefore it is too soon to offer any conclusions regarding depression and HIV in women in India. Hopefully, the research results will help improve treatment protocols for these women.



Salma Pothiawala also volunteered in a food distribution program in India