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Blemished by association: negotiating courtesy stigma within Black African heterosexual relationships with one partner living with HIV (LWH)

Stigma by association (courtesy stigma) with people living with HIV (PLWH) has been minimally explored in the HIV literature and, within Black African heterosexual relationships with one person LWH (serodiscordant relationships). Therefore, this oral presentation suggests that, since it remains a significant domain for HIV, understanding how stigma by association is negotiated is an important consideration in the successful care and management of Black African couples in serodiscordant relationships. I also propose that stigma within these relationships should be explored from the perspectives of both partners because PLWH and their sexual partners without HIV share the burden of HIV infection.

Multi-centre ethical approval was obtained prior to conducting this research in three Genito-urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics located within the National Health Service (NHS) Hospitals in North East London. 19 Black Africans formed most of the participants recruited into the wider study. The emphasis in this presentation is on deeper understanding of how participants negotiate courtesy stigma. Interpretive phenomenological perspective is a particularly appropriate research approach to guide data analysis and interpretations.

One of the main findings explicates how couples negotiate the complex tasks of disclosing their relationships to outsiders; family and friends to evade the stigmatisation and blemish of the relationships or individuals within the relationships.

Understanding how couples in relationships with a partner LWH negotiate stigma by association has implications for providing support for Black African heterosexual couples, and inform research into understanding stigma of HIV as an infectious disease.

Biography

Kemoh Rogers completed his PhD from City University of London in 2016. He is Associate Professor in Nursing Sciences, School of Health Sciences in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK. He leads and teaches modules at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He was previously Senior Lecturer in Public Health with Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge and Chelmsford, UK. His research interests include lived experiences of living with chronic infectious conditions using Interpretive Phenomenology and Strausian Grounded Theory with Symbolic Interactionism as theoretical framework. He has made several presentations at national and international conferences. His publications are mainly on aspects of Relationships with one partner living with HIV.

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