

### Title

Healthy Divas: Measuring the Impact of Gender Affirmation on HIV Care Continuum Outcomes using the Gender Congruence and Life Satisfaction Scale (GCLS)

### Authors

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### • Background

In 2017, the Rutgers Infectious Disease Practice (IDP) initiated gender-affirming hormones integrated with HIV treatment for transgender women with HIV (TWH). Prior to this project, TWH in care at the IDP had low viral load suppression (VLS) (69%) and represented the highest demographic of patients lost to care (11%). Among TWH, greater VLS has been associated with satisfaction with one's gender expression and affirmation.<sup>i</sup>

### • Methods

A convenience sample of self-identified TWH at the IDP were enrolled in Healthy Divas, a 3-month intervention with 7 sessions focused on self-care, gender-affirmation, medication adherence, and engagement in care. Participants completed the GCLS before and after the intervention,<sup>ii</sup> and a chart review assessed changes in viral load, CD4 count, and retention in care (RIC).

### • Results

Eleven TWH completed the intervention. Scores measured by the GCLS showed improvements over time, however the changes were not statistically significant. 100% of the participants had VLS (copies <200)<sup>iii</sup> and 10 of 11 participants were retained in care within the last 12 months of the close of the project.

### • Conclusion

While no statistically significant change was found in GCLS scores, this intervention proved effective in improving RIC and VLS for TWH. This intervention was completed during COVID which may have limited participation and hence the ability to detect a statistically significant effect.

### References

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<sup>i</sup> Sevelius JM, Saberi P, Johnson MO. Correlates of antiretroviral adherence and viral load among transgender women living with HIV. *AIDS Care*. 2014;26(8):976-982. doi:10.1080/09540121.2014.896451

<sup>ii</sup> Jones BA, Bouman WP, Haycraft E et al. The Gender Congruence and Life Satisfaction Scale (GCLS): Development and validation of a scale to measure outcomes from transgender health services. *Internet J of Transgenderism*. 2018. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2018.1453425>

<sup>iii</sup> Eisinger RW, Dieffenbach CW, Fauci AS. HIV Viral Load and Transmissibility of HIV Infection: Undetectable Equals Untransmittable. *JAMA*. 2019 Feb 5;321(5):451-452. doi: 10.1001/jama.2018.21167. PMID: 30629090.