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Psychological Adjustment in Children and Families Living with HIV

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Abstract

Objective To assess psychological adjustment in children living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and their primary caregivers. **Methods** The study protocol included use of standardized questionnaires to assess emotional and behavioral health of 57 children and 54 caregivers (Phase 1). Positive screening led to standardized interviews to assess current psychiatric diagnoses (Phase 2). **Results** Of the 16 children who entered Phase 2, 6 (38%) met the criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis. Of the 15 adults who met the screening criteria, 13 completed a computerized psychiatric interview and all 13 (100%) met the criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis. **Conclusions** While important mental health needs were

identified in families with HIV, the majority of families did not exhibit mental health disorders. These results might reflect the substantial psychosocial resilience of these families. Further study is needed to determine to what extent the mental health needs of children and their caregivers are being met. In addition, identification of protective factors in resilience and coping in families living with a chronic illness is warranted.

Key words: children and families; HIV; psychological adjustment.

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