

Out-of-Pocket Expenditures Associated with HIV Treatment and Care in the Dominican Republic: Results of a Community-Based Research

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Background

Though treatment is free for most people in the Dominican Republic, there are external factors that inhibit individuals to procure treatment or to assist to their regular checkups, such as the inability to pay for transportation, meals, and childcare. Evidence from other countries shows that out-of-pocket (OOP) expenditures can generate significant barriers to access and retention in care for persons living with HIV.

The objective of this research was to estimate OOP expenses incurred by persons with HIV, and to analyze characteristics associated with them, including socio-demographic characteristics, current treatment options, vital status, use of health services, and impact of opportunistic infections.

Methods

Data was collected between October and November 2015 with a community based participatory research (CBPR). The sample consisted in 191 randomly selected adults living with HIV, enrolled in ART or pre-ART services across 10 sites in and around Santo Domingo.

Researchers conducted individual face-to-face interviews with different themes: demographic characteristics, current visit at health facility, vital status, and OOP expenditures associated with HIV services in the last six months.

Results

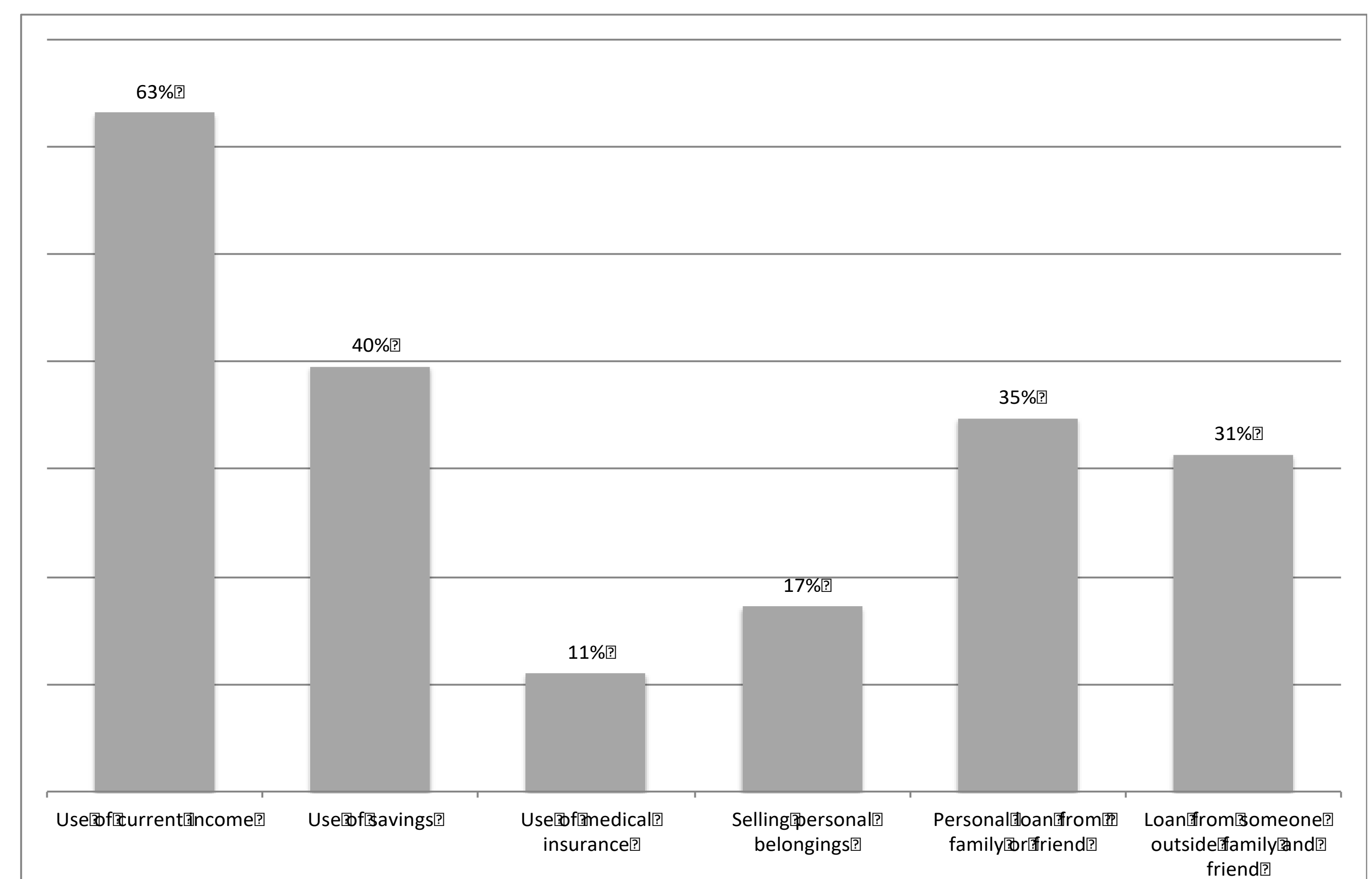
Individuals interviewed reported an average total spending on health for the last six months corresponding to US\$ 153. Besides, individuals reported an average of US\$ 28 spent on transport and housing to access HIV services.

When looking at how out-of-pocket expenditures were spent, the two most important categories were hospital stay and nutrition complements, which corresponded to US\$35 and US\$43 respectively.

Reported Out of Pocket Spending in the last six months (2015 US\$)	N	% of individuals reporting an expense	Mean (across total sample)	Min	Max	Median
Average spending Hospital stay	186	13%	35	0	1,102	0
Average spending Ambulatory care	184	7%	5	0	264	0
Average spending Drugs (excluding ART)	185	31%	22	0	330	0
Average spending Nutrition complements	185	69%	43	0	1,102	13
Average spending Health products	184	29%	12	0	661	0
Average spending Tests	184	46%	16	0	176	0
Average spending Alternative care	184	18%	9	0	441	0
Average spending Others (health related)	185	21%	11	0	220	0
Average spending Transport to access health care	185	85%	27	0	264	13
Average spending Lodging	185	4%	1	0	88	0
Total health spending (excl. transports and housing)	182	89%	153	0	2,385	62
Total transport and housing	184	85%	28	0	264	14

These important expenses can lead individuals to rely on external financial sources.

17% reported having to sell personal belongings to pay for health expenditures, 35% having to ask a personal loan from family or friend, and 31% having to take a loan from someone outside their personal and family circle.



Gender	
Women	55.8%
Men	41.1%
Transgender woman	3.2%
Age	
	38.9 (±12.38)
Married or living together	
	41.3%
Education	
No formal schooling or less than primary school	38.6%
Completed primary school	33.3%
Completed secondary school or higher	28.0%
Work situation	
Employed	28.9%
Looking for a job	25.3%
Stay at home	24.2%
Stay at home, student, retired or other	21.6%
Average number of children	
	2 (±1.8)
Average number of household members	
	4.7 (±1.9)
Sexual orientation	
Heterosexual	88.4%
Homosexual or bisexual	11.6%
Spanish is the main household language	
	97.9%
Socioeconomic status	
Household owns a fridge	78.0%
Household owns a car	5.8%
Household use piped or trucked water	72.6%
Reported average household revenue of US\$440 or less per month	75.6%
Health insurance	
	53.4%
Mutual health plan	
	16.4%

Conclusions

The costs of transport and housing to access HIV services appeared to be significant for a vast majority of the individuals surveyed (85%).

Our results suggest that while the majority of people with HIV reports limited amount of OOP expenditures, the latter could be a significant barrier to access and retention to HIV care and treatment for a minority of individuals facing important expenses in the Dominican Republic.