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# A Discussion on HIV/ AIDS: Are We Confronting the Stigma?

Paul Rotzal

*La Salle University*, [rotzalp1@student.lasalle.edu](mailto:rotzalp1@student.lasalle.edu)

Joanna Szyszkiewicz

*La Salle University*, [szyszkiewiczj1@student.lasalle.edu](mailto:szyszkiewiczj1@student.lasalle.edu)

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# A Discussion on HIV/ AIDS: Are We Confronting the Stigma?

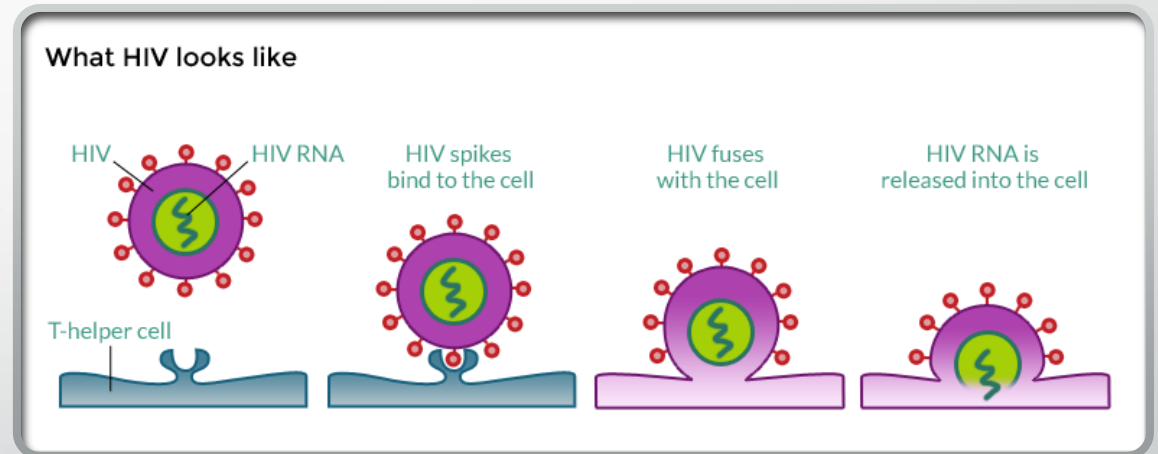
Paul Rotzal *Chemistry, 2019*

Joanna Szyszkiewicz *Nursing, 2018*



# What is HIV?

- HIV stands for "Human Immunodeficiency Virus"
- HIV enters CD<sub>4</sub>+ T-cells and uses them to make more copies of itself then destroys the cell
- Retrovirus
- if left untreated:
  - "Viral Load" continues to grow
  - immune system weakens
- Symptoms vary



# What is AIDS?



- If HIV is not treated, it will develop into AIDS
  - Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus
- A person is considered to have AIDS when the immune system becomes so weakened it cannot protect itself from serious infection
- AIDS is referred to as advanced HIV infection
- T Cell count falls below 200
- Symptoms include cancers and can be fatal



# How do you contract HIV?

- **Common assumptions of contraction**
  - Casual contact (hugging, shaking hands, etc.)
  - Saliva, sweat
  - Through the air
- **How HIV is actually contracted**
  - Sharing a needle
  - Unprotected sex
  - Mother to child during pregnancy

# Is There a Cure?



- There currently is no cure for HIV
- Only medicine that helps prevent further harm to the immune system
- Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)
  - Requires more than one drug to be taken
    - Reduces viral load and prevents resistance to the drugs
- Prevented using drugs such as "PrEP"



Why do you think HIV/AIDS  
is stigmatized?

# How is it viewed by society?



- Lack of education and misinformation causes stigma
- Fear of HIV causes many people to falsely believe:
  - Associated with homosexuality, drug use, sex work or infidelity
  - Only transmitted through sex which is taboo
  - Result of personal irresponsibility that deserves to be punished
- Stigma prevents access to health services and causes discrimination
- Many are shunned especially by family members



If you were HIV positive, would you reveal your status on a first date?



If you were on a first date with someone, would you want them to reveal their status with you on the first date? How would you react if they were HIV positive?



Would you be afraid to get tested? Why? Why not?



Do pros outweigh the cons for needle exchange programs?



Do you think our society does an adequate job on educating citizens about HIV and AIDS? What could be done to improve?

Should we educate our children about HIV/AIDS? At what age do you think it is appropriate to start this education?



Should you notify your employer if you are HIV positive?

Would you notify your employer if you were HIV positive?

# Thanks for coming!

- Check out our other events on campus!!
  - AIDS Memorial Quilt in the Union and Founders Hall
  - HIV/AIDS Timeline on Main campus Thursday!
  - Mobile HIV Testing Center on Main Campus Thursday 10am-5pm
    - Mouth swab! Free!
  - Evensong Thursday 5pm in the Chapel!
  - T-Shirts! 5\$! Long sleeved!