

For Immediate Release

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Valley AIDS Council and UTRGV researchers report on the metabolic disease burden in persons with HIV in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV)

July 7, 2021 - In a paper published on July 5th, 2021, researchers from the Valley AIDS Council (VAC), and [South Texas Diabetes and Obesity Institute](#) (STDOI) and [Department of Human Genetics](#) at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine reported an increased burden of type 2 diabetes in persons with HIV in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). The research article entitled, “Association of HIV-1 Infection and Antiretroviral Therapy with Type 2 Diabetes in the Hispanic Population of the Rio Grande Valley, Texas, USA” has been published in the journal *Frontiers in Medicine*.

While the heavy burden of metabolic diseases in the RGV population is well recognized, the prevalence of metabolic diseases in specific groups such as persons with HIV has not been well studied. The VAC and UTRGV investigators report that persons with HIV in the RGV have approximately twice the type 2 diabetes prevalence when compared to uninfected individuals from South Texas. They also found that this increased prevalence is not entirely linked to increased obesity but may be associated with poor metabolic health. Perhaps, it is related to less responsiveness to insulin action coupled with impairment of insulin secretion. Thus, the findings from this study support future investigations into insulin action and secretion to pave the way for development of superior drug regimens.

Dr. Ruben Martinez, a lead physician on the study said, “These groundbreaking findings will help the physicians as well as the researchers to plan and conduct future prevention programs for better understanding of the mechanisms responsible for increased burden of diabetes in persons with HIV.”

The study was a collaborative effort led by Dora A. Martinez, M.D., Chief Medical Officer and Ruben D. Martinez, M.D., Clinical Medical Director, both physicians at the VAC and Juan-Carlos Lopez Alvarenga, M.D., Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Ravindranath Duggirala, Ph.D., Professor, and Srinivas Mummidi, D.V.M., Ph.D., Associate Professor, STDOI and Department of Human Genetics, UTRGV School of Medicine. Drs. Lopez-Alvarenga, Dora Martinez, Mummidi, Ruben Martinez were the primary authors of the paper.

The VAC is the primary provider of HIV prevention, education and testing services and the only Ryan White funded agency providing medical care and supportive services for people living with HIV in a three-county area that stretches from the lower Rio Grande Valley to the US/Mexico border; the VAC has clinics in Harlingen and McAllen, TX. The STDOI and Department of Human Genetics at the UTRGV School of Medicine are dedicated to advancing the health of South Texas through cutting-edge research on diabetes, obesity, and related disorders.