

# Ryan White Grant Dental Program

## Survey Responses

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March 2012

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## **Introduction**

Mary's Center is a Federally Qualified Health Center which uses a "holistic and multipronged approach" to serve the needs of over 24,000 uninsured or underinsured individuals in the greater Washington D.C area (Mary's Center). Washington D.C is unique among other American urban centers due to its high prevalence of HIV infection. Washington D.C has the highest rate of HIV infection in the United States, with 3% of the overall population infected. The prevalence of HIV infection varies greatly by ward, race, and socioeconomic level (DCDOH).

In 2011, Mary's Center requested funding from the Ryan White Program, Part A, to support a mission to provide dental care to underserved HIV positive D.C residents. They were successful in receiving this grant and have been providing dental services this past year in their new service site in Ward 4. Mary's Center hopes to close the gap between the oral health needs of the HIV positive community and inaccessibility due to a lack of insurance and the scarcity of dentists willing to perform services of HIV positive patients. In accordance with Mary's Center's commitment to program evaluation, phone surveys were conducted to uncover the experiences of the patients (Proposal).

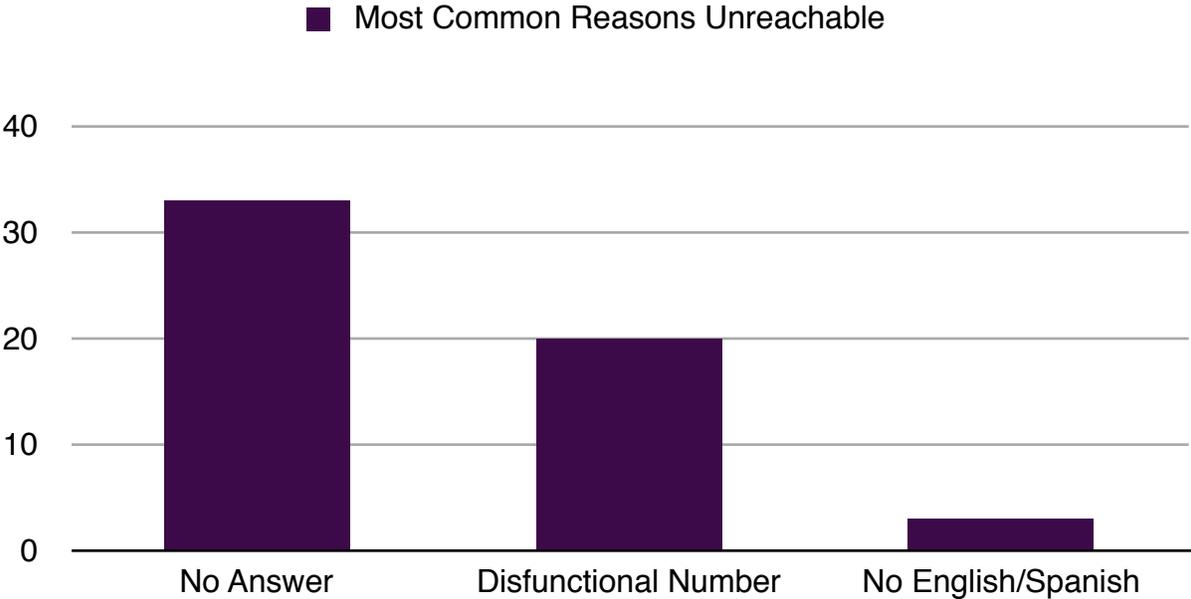
## **Methods**

In order to provide an evaluation of the dental care program, a survey was conducted in both English and Spanish with questions addressing three major concerns: the provision of adequate dental services, cultural competency, and the protection of the privacy and dignity of HIV positive people. The first of these goals ensures that the basic dental services provided were of good quality and efficiently

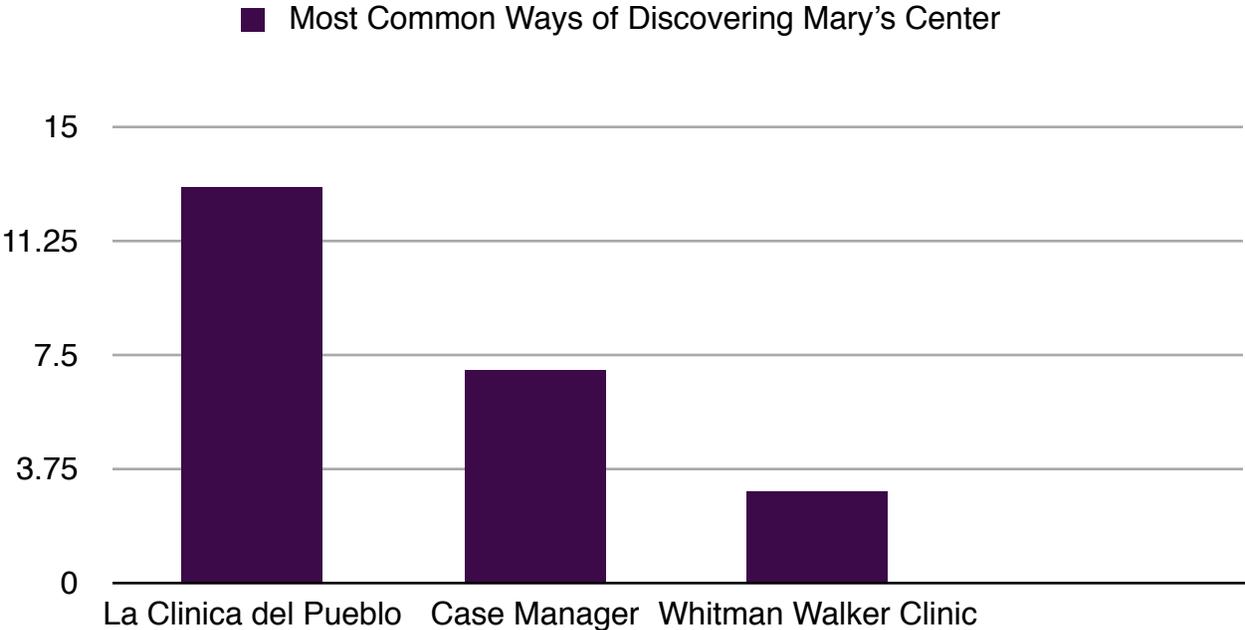
provided. These questions could be found on any routine dental survey, regardless of the population being served. The second concern tries to ensure that all of the recipients of the dental program received high-quality care, regardless of cultural affiliation or native language. Mary's Center serves a widely diverse population of immigrants from around the world, making this an extremely relevant concern. Lastly, the third provision tries to uncover if any patients suffered discrimination at Mary's Center due to their HIV status.

The survey was conducted by two individuals, one fluent in Spanish and English and one fluent only in English. Both of these individuals were not employees of Mary's Center, in order to prevent bias and ensure a comprehensive review of services. Over the course of several weeks, from late January until early March 2012, participants were contacted via telephone. From a list of 103 participants, approximately 35 were reached for completed or partially completed surveys, approximately 34% of the participants.

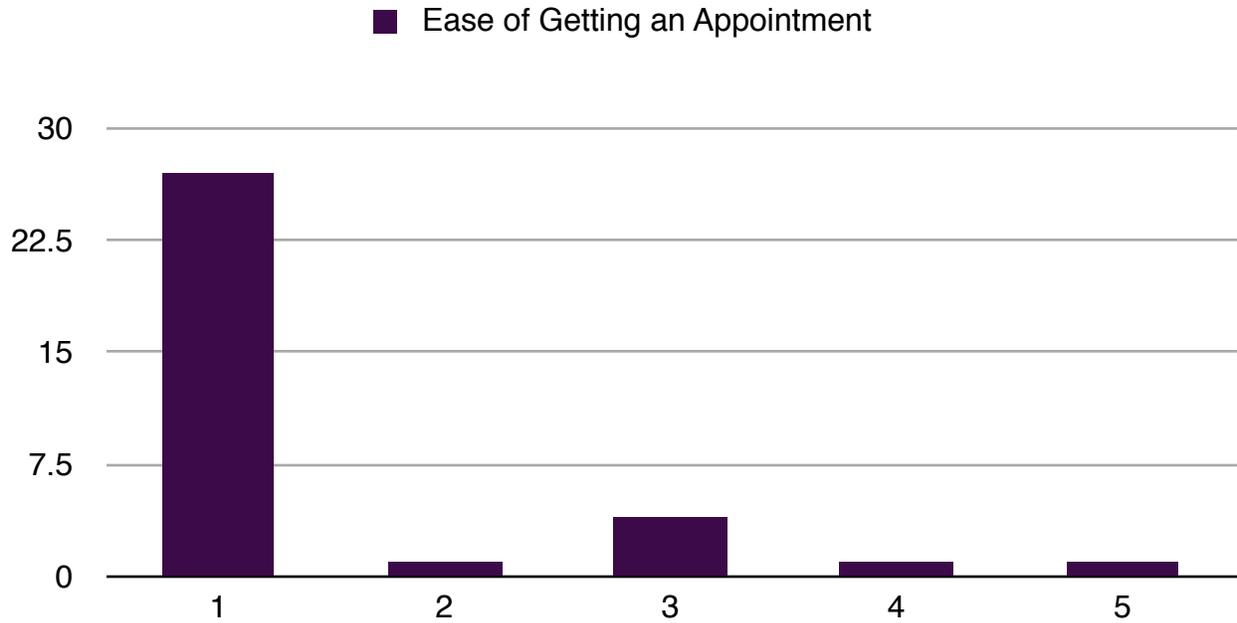
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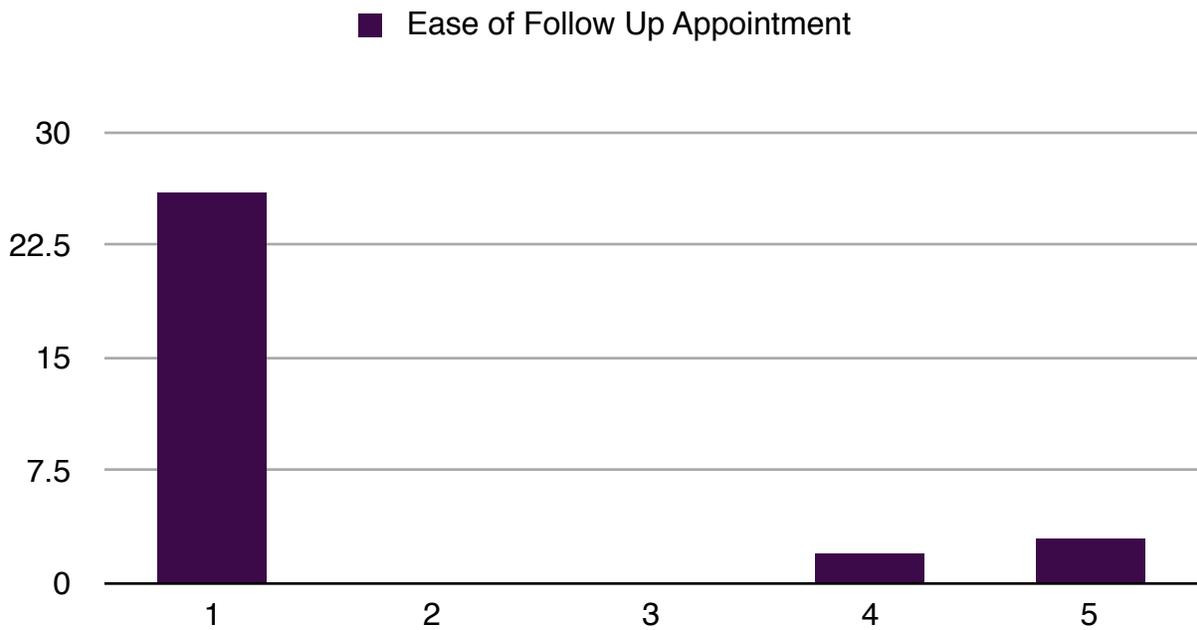
**Figure 1: Most Common Reasons People Could Not Be Contacted. Other causes which made up less than 2% of participants included: being in the hospital, not wanting to participate, being out of the country, and not having had their visit yet.**



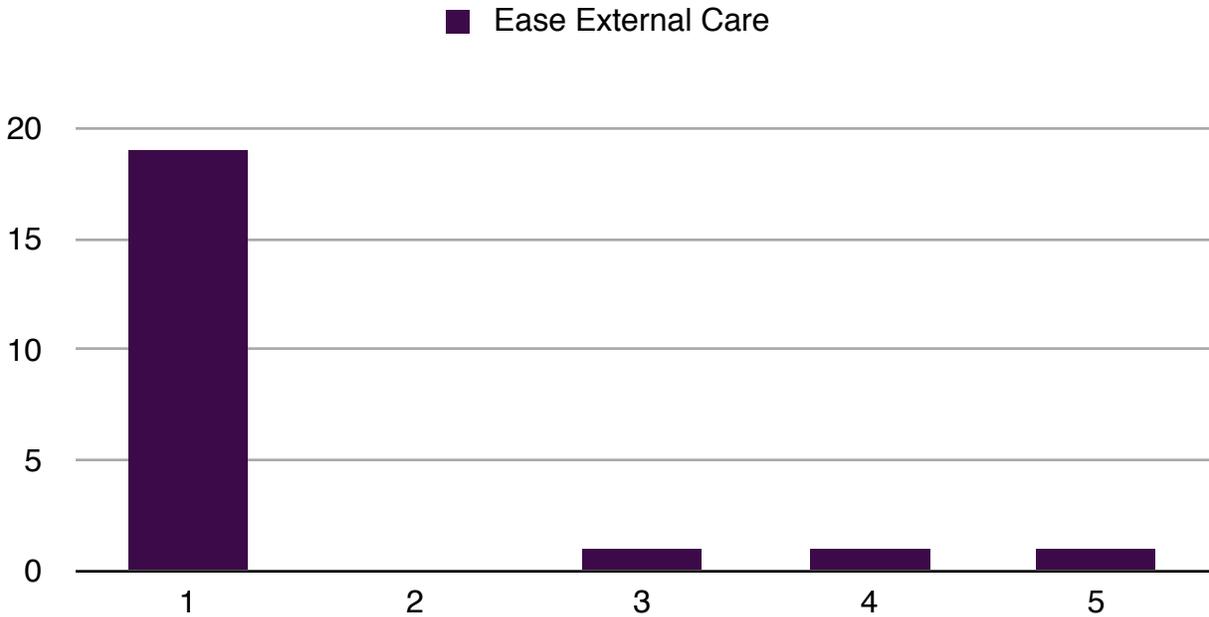
**Figure 2: How did you find out about Mary's Center? Other sources which represented less than 2% of participants include: referral by a friend, the Spanish newspaper, *Tiempo Latino*, Google search, referral by other dentist/ doctor, the Blair Underwood Clinic, and the Upper Cardozo Clinic.**



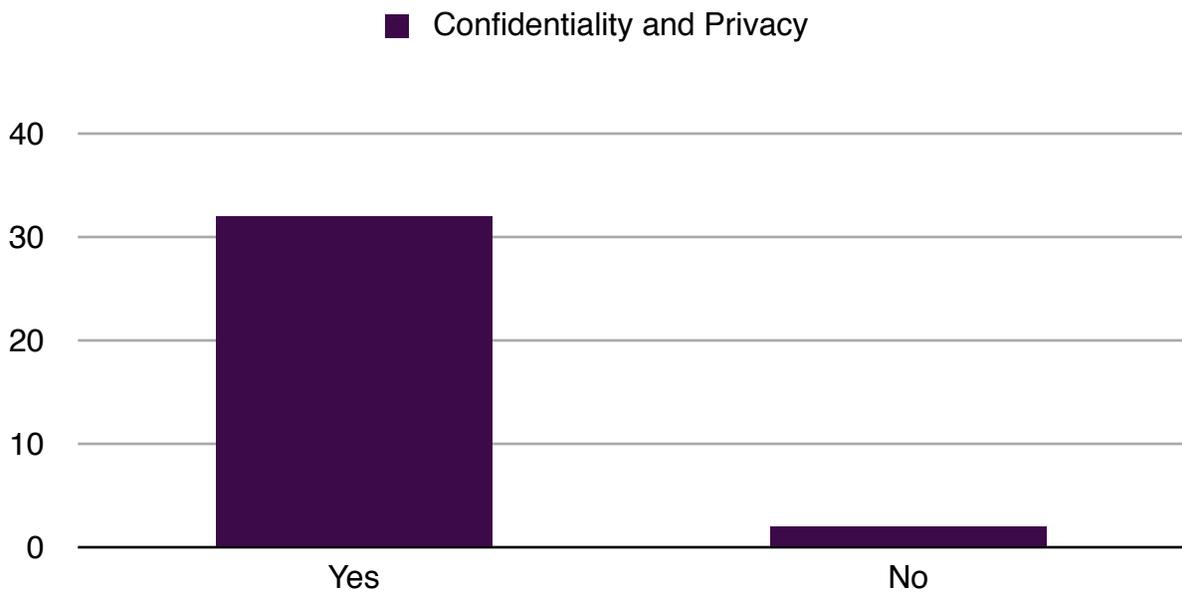
**Figure 3: How easy was it for you on a scale from 1 to 5 to get an appointment with 1 being the easiest and 5 the most difficult?**



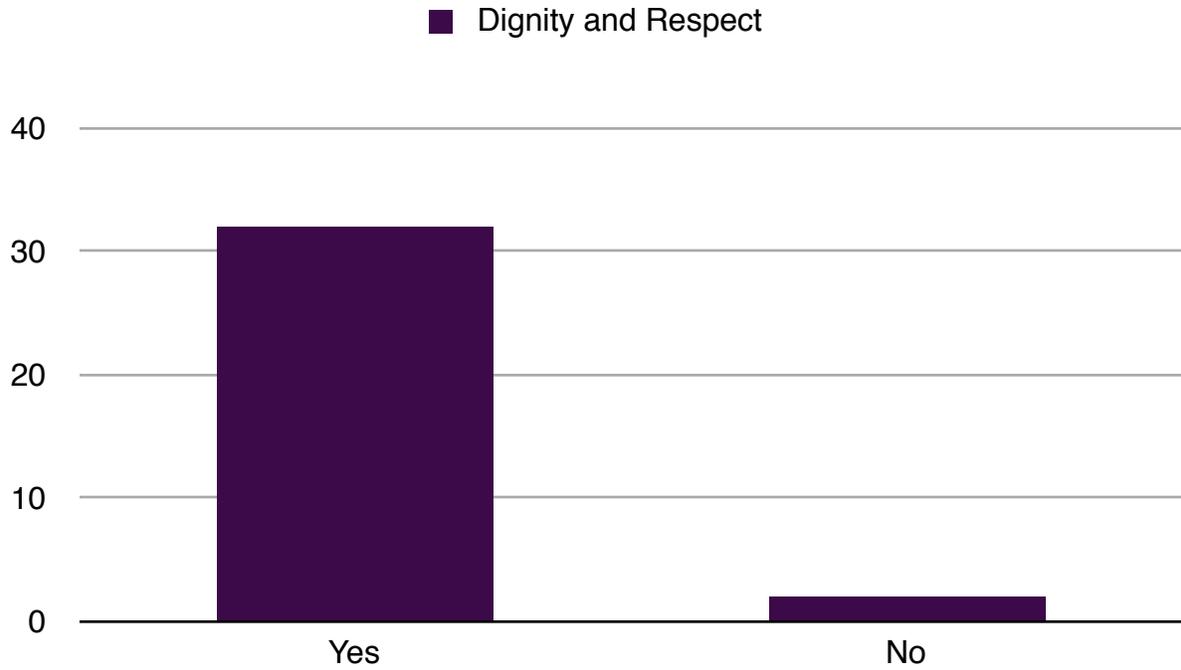
**Figure 4: How easy was it for you to get a follow-up appointment of a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the easiest and 5 being the most difficult?**



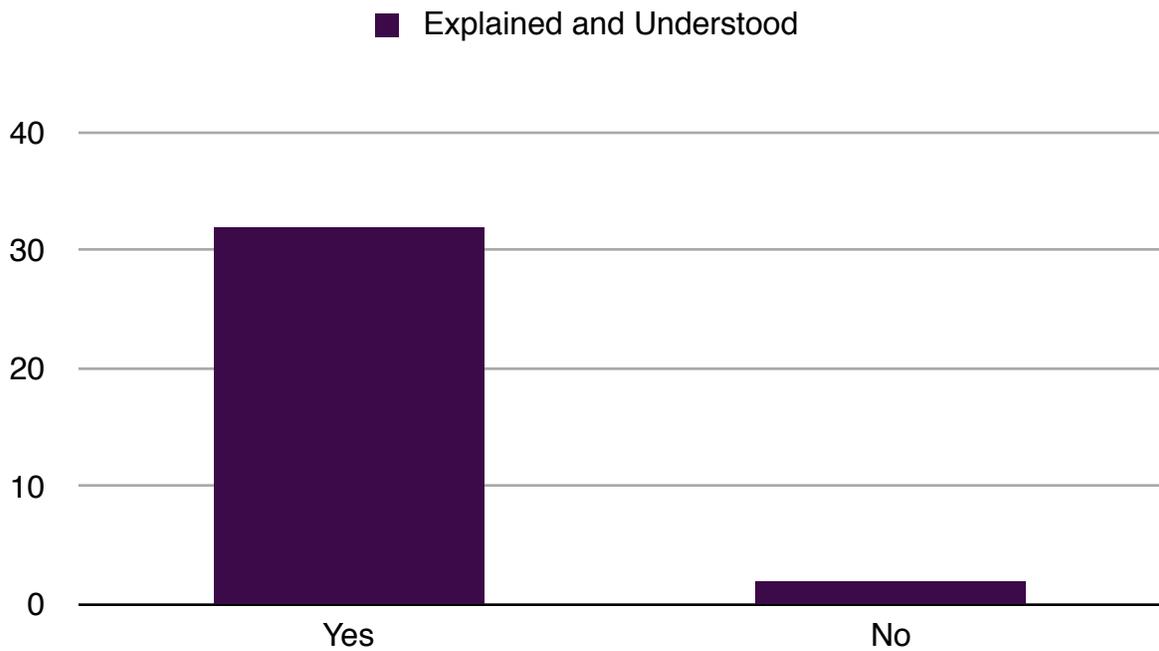
**Figure 5: How easy was it for you to schedule external specialty care, if necessary, on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the easiest and 5 being most difficult?**



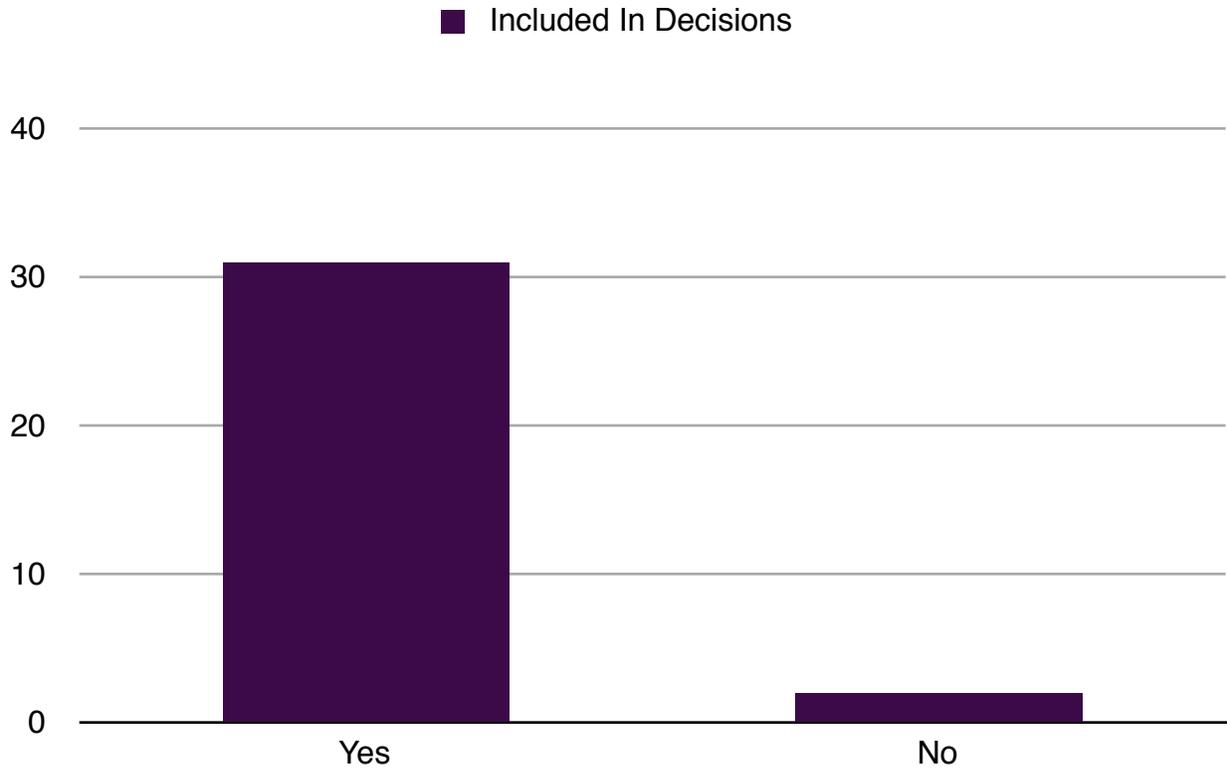
**Figure 6: Did you feel your confidentiality and privacy was respected during your dental visit?**



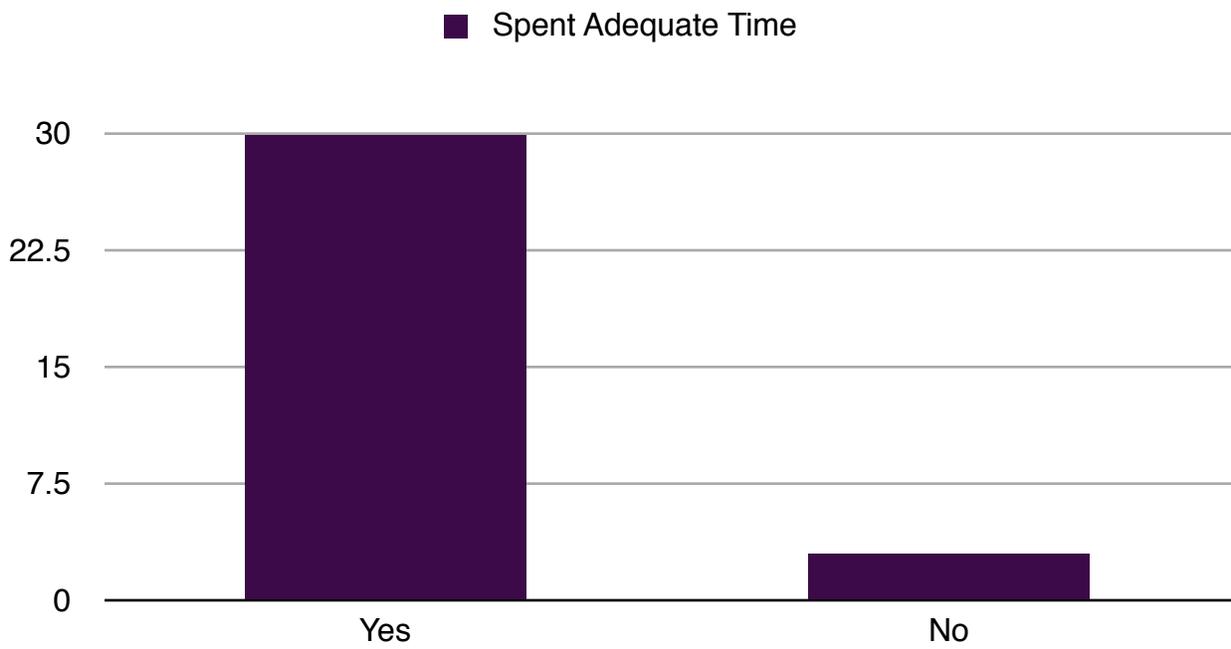
**Figure 7: Did you feel you were treated with dignity and respect?**



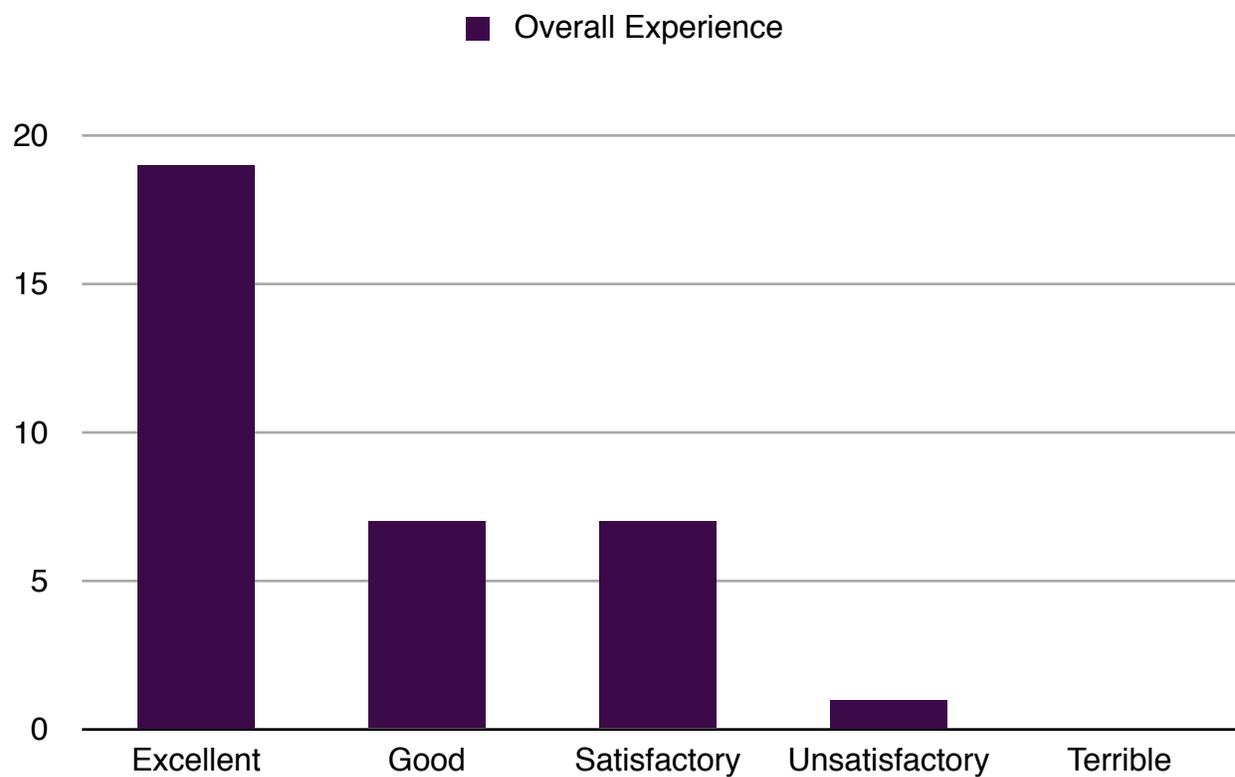
**Figure 8: Did you feel that your dental care was explained so that you had adequate understanding of your dental care/procedures? By whom (ex: Dentist, dental assistant, hygienist, receptionist)?**



**Figure 9: Were you included in decisions regarding your dental care and follow up care (if applicable)?**



**Figure 10: Did you feel your provider spent an adequate amount of time with you?**



**Figure 11: Please describe your overall experience.**

## Discussion

Overall, the feedback was exceedingly positive. Patients frequently commented on Mary's Centers "laid back" and friendly atmosphere. Many patients were also very pleased with the friendliness and helpfulness of the receptionists. One participant commented "Through the whole process, I felt very at home, here everybody was very laid back. Both of the receptionists are great, very friendly, and spoke Spanish." Another patient commented "I think you all are doing great work, great work. The receptionists are so friendly and keen. I don't like filling out paperwork, but they smile and tell you all the reasons why they need it. They have great etiquette." People were generally impressed by the high prevalence of Spanish speaking staff, a critical feature, since Mary's Center reports that 80% of their clients are immigrants from Latin American countries (Proposal).

There was, however, some negative feedback from participants. Some patients reported difficulty transitioning from dental care at Mary's Center to outside specialty care. Patients reported being referred to doctors who would not take their insurance and waiting a long time for appointments. While an overwhelming number of participants agreed that Mary's Center respected their privacy, several people reported rather alarming violations of patient privacy. One patient reported "I didn't like that every time I came in for an appointment I had to fill out the same questionnaire. Sometimes they would leave my personal information where everyone else can see it. I don't want everybody knowing my condition." Another added "I didn't like that one of the receptionists yelled out loud , 'Are you the one with HIV?' I was very uncomfortable and

felt disrespected.” One woman reported such a horrible experience that she refused to even take the survey.

Another concern that became evident was, despite Mary’s Center’s thorough approach to cultural competency regarding Latin American immigrants, other cultures and languages feel neglected. One patient reported that due to a lack of communication between himself and the dentist, he underwent an extraction procedure that he did not want. The participant was extremely distraught over the situation and relayed a sense of frustration and powerlessness. He commented “They didn’t respect what I was asking, they pulled teeth that I did not want pulled. There was a language barrier. I didn’t see anything special about this clinic.” This man was from Ethiopia. Two other participants were unable to provide feedback due to the lack of an Amharic speaking person providing the survey. There may have been an even stronger discrepancy between cultural competency for Latin Americans and other groups had their responses been able to be recorded.

Another group which could benefit from increased cultural competency is the transexual and homosexual community. One of the primary modes of transmission of HIV in Washington D.C is by men having sex with men. This is a large community in D.C and Mary’s Center may require more sensitivity regarding their needs. One participant who identified as a transsexual women reported “Sometimes in front of everybody, they ask are you HIV positive? Which is very uncomfortable. They need some serious training. That happened two or three times. Someone there asked me if I had a vagina or not. I was being asked personal questions, like ‘Do you know that it’s wrong [to be transsexual]?’ I decided not to go back there because I don’t want

somebody to ask me those questions. It happened to one of my friends too.” A different respondent also commented “The place is nice and the service was excellent, but I was discriminated against because of my sexual orientation.”

Despite the previous criticism of the Mary’s Center Dental Program, its reviews have been mostly positive. The negative aspects have been focused on in this report because they show where there is room for improvement. This program is a truly phenomenal opportunity for many people in the Washington D.C community. With some minor improvements, Mary’s Center could provide many years of quality dental care to HIV positive people.

**Recommendations**

Based on the preceding research, Mary's Center could benefit from the following recommendations. It seems that the staff training for patients of alternative lifestyles, particularly homosexual and transsexual people, could be greatly improved. Men who have sex with men are a significant part of the epidemic in Washington D.C and any initiative to benefit the HIV+ population must provide nondiscriminatory services for this group.

A vast number of participants could not be reached over the phone. Almost 20% of all participants had a non-functional number, either disconnected or incorrect. This is an astonishingly high number. But unreliable access to a telephone may be a reality for D.C's underserved populations. Computer based surveys may be more effective in the future. They allow people to answer questions on their own time, can be produced in several languages, and may include more participants who do not have phone access. Many people have access to computers through public libraries, work, and friends. Maintaining an email address may be easier than maintaining a phone line. Email could also decrease the number of people who simply did not answer. Several people were called up to 5 times over the course of about a month and were consistently unavailable.

It may also be necessary to increase Amharic speakers available in the dental clinic. Several participants either had negative experiences because of poor communication or were unable to participate in the survey due to a lack of Amharic translators. Ethiopians are becoming a huge community in Washington D.C, and since the overall prevalence of HIV is higher in Ethiopia and much of sub-Saharan Africa than

it is in Central America, it may be necessary to focus Amharic and other African language translators at posts where there are services for HIV positive people.

For future evaluations of the program, it may be interesting and necessary to ask for demographic information, such as race, age, or ward, to see how quality of care is reflected in these populations. It may help identify discrepancies.

## Appendix A: English Survey

Mary Center Phone Survey for the Evaluation of the Ryan White Grant Dental Program for HIV + D.C Residents

Disclaimer: This is a survey for informational purposes only. Your identity will be kept completely confidential. Nothing said during this interview will have any affect on your quality of care or ability to access care. We are very interested to hear about all aspects of your experience with Mary's Center Dental Services for our improvement. Thank you for your help!

Name/ DOB/ Last Visit

- 1) How did you hear about us?
  
- 2) How easy was it for you on a scale from 1 to 5, 5 being the most difficult and 1 being the easiest to:
  - A) Get an appointment
  - B) Get a follow up visit
  - C) Get an appointment for external specialty care if necessary
  
- 3) Did you feel your confidentiality and privacy was respected during your dental visit?
  
- 4) Did you feel you were treated with dignity and respect?
  
- 5) Were the receptionists helpful and polite?
  
- 6) Did you feel that your dental care was explained so that you had adequate understanding of your dental care/procedures? By whom (ex: Dentist, dental assistant, hygienist, receptionist)?
  
- 7) Were you included in decisions regarding your dental care and follow up care (if applicable)?
  
- 8) Did you feel your provider spent an adequate amount of time with you?

9) Please describe your overall experience.

Excellent

Good

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

Terrible

10) Why?

11) Is there anything else about your experience that you feel we should know?

Thank you!

**Appendix B: Spanish Survey****Mary Center encuesta de evaluación del programa Ryan White Grant Dental Para Pacientes con HIV y residente de DC**

**Responsabilidades:** Esta encuesta es para información solamente. Su identidad sera totalmente confidencial. Nada dicho en esta entrevista le afectara en el servicio que MaryCenter le prove. Estamos muy interesados de escuchar su experiencia con el servicio Dental de MaryCenter. ¡Gracias por su ayuda!

1. Nombre/ edad/ ultima visita
  
2. Como se entero de nosotros?
  
3. Le result fácil para usted en escala de 1 al 5, siendo 1 el mas facil y el 5 mas dificl de
  - a) Conseguir una cita
  - b) Conseguir una cita de seguimiento
  - c) Conseguir una cita para cuidado especializado , si era necesario
  - d)
  
4. Sintió usted que su privacidad y confidencialidad fue respetada durante su vistia dental?
  
5. Sintió usted que fue tratado (a) con dignidad y respeto?
  
  
6. Fue la recepcionista amable y cortes?

7. Sintió usted que su cuidado dental fue explicado de modo que usted tuviera el entendimiento a decuado de su cuiddado/ procedimiento dental? Por quien?
8. Fue incluido usted en decisions en cuanto a su cuidado dental y atención seguimiento?
9. Sintió usted que su dentista dedico una cantidad adecuada de tiempo con usted?
10. Por favor, describa su experiencia en general?
  - a) Excelente
  - b) Buena
  - c) Satisfactoria
  - d) Insatisfactoria
  - e) Terrible

Por que??

11. Hay algo mas acerca de su experiencia que siente que deberíamos de saber?

Gracias!!

## Works Cited

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