TuSalud

Is There Really a COVID-Monkey-AIDS Pox?

Social media posts claim that someone has been diagnosed with “COVID-Monkey-AIDS-Pox.” Don’t be alarmed. Here’s why.

September 4, 2024 By Trent Straube

If you’ve scrolled through social media posts recently, you might have seen posts announcing, “the first person ever diagnosed with COVID-monkey-AIDS-pox” and stating, “This is getting serious guys.” The posts also include a news video from LA-based broadcaster ABC7.

Below are two examples of social media posts about the HIV, COVID-19 and mpox diagnosis (in some cases, the posts are followed by warnings and fact-checks):

> The first person ever diagnosed with COVID-Monkey-AIDS-Pox.
>
> This is getting serious guys. pic.twitter.com/xG2Lt5N83f
>
> — Champagne Joshi (@JoshWalkos) August 12, 2024

> The first person ever diagnosed with COVID-Monkey-AIDS-Pox. This is getting serious guys.
>
> Posted by Cnc Simon on Tuesday, August 13, 2024

At best, such posts are misleading. Although the posts contain some facts, they twist reality into

scary-sounding clickbait. Here's what to know.

First off, there is no such thing as a single virus that causes COVID-19, mpox (formerly known as monkeypox) and HIV (the virus that, when untreated, can lead to AIDS). However, it is possible for an individual to contract each of these viruses separately within a short time period and become coinfected with all three at once.

In fact, as Reuters reports in an article investigating the claims behind these social media posts, the ABC7 news segment originally aired in August 2022 and describes the first documented case of a person coinfected with mpox, SARS-CoV-2 (which causes COVID-19) and HIV. At the time, it wasn't known that COVID-19 and mpox could occur simultaneously. The case was later written about in the Journal of Infection.

In that unusual case, a 36-year-old Italian man returned from a trip to Spain in 2022 and, after developing various symptoms, including fever, sore throat and a rash, tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 and mpox. He was also screened for HIV and various sexually transmitted infections and tested positive for HIV. Studies have shown that people with advanced HIV can develop more severe mpox illness.

Why would misleading posts declaring a super pox be gaining traction now? Not only do they prey on common fears, but they also play on current news. For legitimate reasons, these three viruses have been making headlines lately.

COVID-19 is in the news once again because of the summer surge in cases and because updated vaccines are now available. Meanwhile, a new version of mpox has been spreading in Africa this summer, with at least one case documented in Europe (vaccinations against the strain of mpox that appeared in the United States in 2022 also protect against the new mpox).

Recent headlines about HIV, however, have been much less dire. Indeed, results of a trial in Africa found that a twice-yearly injection of lenacapavir is 100% effective as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV in women. What's more, other news from this summer's International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2024) reported on "The Next Berlin Patient: Another Man Cured of HIV After Stem Cell Transplant."

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