

## **The determinants of access to general practice in a shared care model for people living with HIV in Northern NSW: a qualitative study**

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**Background:** Decreased mortality in people living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has led to an ageing population with a significant comorbidity burden. A shared care model has been proposed to provide effective primary care through coordinated liaison between general practitioners and HIV specialists. As specialists have historically managed HIV in some regional communities, effective implementation of the model depends on access to general practice. This study explores patient perspectives of the barriers and enablers to accessing shared care focusing on general practice.

**Methods:** Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with people living with HIV who either resided in or accessed care in Northern NSW. Interviews were conducted via video conferencing, phone or face-to-face. The data was coded using NVivo and underwent deductive thematic analysis utilising an access framework conceptualised by Levesque and colleagues.

**Results:** Shared care access was substantially influenced by access to general practice. Perceiving additive value was a challenge to participants' ability to seek and engage in shared care. Participants' healthcare beliefs, expectations and experiences with stigma led to prioritising interpersonal qualities in specialist care over the potential health benefits of primary care. Continuity greatly facilitated access to general practice but logistical factors such as affordability, transport and availability impacted participants' ability to access regular high-quality care.

**Conclusions:** Navigating anticipated stigma in general practice within the resource limitations of regional healthcare was a barrier to effective care. General practitioners' ability to build rapport and long-term relationships with participants was instrumental in their perception of valuable care. Strategies to secure continuity of care with interpersonally skilled general practitioners is required to provide quality primary care for PLWH in regional Australia, which can be supported by specialists in a shared care model.

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