

THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNICATION AND CO-ORDINATION OF CARE FOR HIV IN REGIONAL NSW: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Background: There is growing consensus that primary care providers have an important role in providing holistic, preventative care for people living with HIV (PLHIV). In regional NSW, much HIV care is delivered through specialist services, thus adequate coordination and communication between health care professionals (HCPs) is crucial. This study aimed to explore patient experiences of the coordination of care and HCP communication for PLHIV in regional NSW.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews with a consumer engagement focus were conducted with thirteen PLHIV in regional NSW. Recruitment was via specialist waiting room advertisement and social media promotion by an HIV community organisation. Interviews were conducted via video conferencing, face-to-face, or via telephone call. Interviews were audio-recorded and manually transcribed. Transcripts were coded inductively and iterative thematic analysis was conducted to explore perspectives on communication and co-ordination.

Results: Themes emerged in the following areas: 1) Patient perception of care coordination; 2) Patient understanding of modality of communication; 3) Patient support for communication between healthcare professionals; and 4) Concerns for information sharing between healthcare professionals. Participants identified that coordination and communication between health care providers are essential in the delivery of their health care, but some were hesitant for this to occur. Hesitancy was entrenched in some patients' distrust of healthcare due to previous experiences of confidentiality breaches and stigma. Clearly defined roles in coordinating care are essential for adequate interdisciplinary communication between healthcare professions for HIV care.

Conclusion: This study identifies the need for clarity in coordination between HCPs in order to deliver safe and effective HIV care. Patient support for communication between HCPs may be strengthened by ensuring trust in the people and systems involved.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: This project was completed as one of four subprojects of a larger study exploring patient perspectives of models of HIV care in regional NSW. This study was completed as an MD research project at the University of Sydney. All other authors declare no competing interests.

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