

REDUCING HEALTH WORKERS' STIGMATISING ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV VIA MICRO-LEARNING INTERVENTIONS

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Background:

The negative health impacts of stigma for people who inject drugs (PWID) and people living with HIV (PLHIV) are well established, however, evidence regarding the effectiveness of stigma reduction interventions within healthcare settings is lacking. Research suggests that health workers may behave negatively towards certain clients when they believe that their colleagues hold negative attitudes towards those groups. Drawing on social norms theory, this study evaluated the effectiveness of online micro-learning interventions in reducing stigmatising attitudes held by health workers towards PWID and PLHIV.

Methods:

Australian health workers were randomly allocated to one of two interventions: 1) PWID (n=321); 2) PLHIV (n=332). Participants completed baseline and post-intervention measures of their own attitudes and their perceptions of their colleagues' attitudes towards the relevant client group. The intervention consisted of a four-minute video presentation by an experienced health worker, who discussed research findings to challenge assumptions about colleagues' attitudes. Changes in attitudes from pre- to post-intervention were analysed.

Results:

At baseline, health workers believed that their colleagues' attitudes towards PLHIV were more stigmatising than their own ($Z=9.23$, $p<.001$), but reported no difference between their own attitudes and their colleagues' attitudes towards PWID ($Z=.84$, $p=.40$). After the intervention, participants reported less stigmatising attitudes towards PWID than at baseline ($Z=6.68$, $p<.001$), but no change in attitudes towards PLHIV ($Z=.05$, $p=.96$). Compared to baseline, participants perceived their colleagues to have less stigmatising attitudes towards both PLHIV ($Z=2.43$, $p=.02$) and PWID ($Z=5.49$, $p<.001$) after the intervention.

Conclusion:

Brief videos informed by social norms theory demonstrated positive results in reducing stigmatising attitudes held by health workers and changing their perceptions of their colleagues' attitudes. Micro-learning interventions have the potential to be scaled, contextually tailored, and embedded into professional development activities for health workers and students, which may contribute meaningfully to reducing stigma in health care settings.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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