

COMMUNITY BASED SPECIALIST NURSING CARE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Background

The uncertainty of the response to Covid-19 and the resultant closure or restrictions on many support services led to the need for enhanced support of people living with HIV/AIDS by community-based specialist HIV nurses to monitor the general and mental health of their clients.

Method

Additional nursing support via telehealth, email, text, or face to face was delivered over a one-year period from the start of the Australian government lockdown in 2020. A brief monitoring tool was developed to assess general health, well-being, mood, mental health and practical supports, leading to assessment and referral.

Results

25 participants enrolled in project with 700 additional occasions of service over one year. All of the clients stated additional monitoring and referrals helpful during a time of uncertainty.

Assistance provided to:

access a medical review, 84%; pathology collection 64%, additional medication access 44% and medication delivery 28%.

88% reported increased anxiety and 80% required additional direct psychological support. Psychiatry review arranged for 20% resulting in 3 psychosis diagnoses and two requiring changes of psychiatric medications. 72% reported increased substance and alcohol use with one admission for detoxification.

50% experienced reduced access to food and nurses arranged distribution of 850 frozen meals supplied by a LGBTI social group and small Christmas hampers. Many clients with longer HIV duration said that this reminded them of the kindness of the LGBTI community in the early days of the HIV epidemic.

Although exercise was recommended nil engaged in additional activity.

Conclusion:

This project assisted PLHIV to navigate the anxiety provoking and turbulent initial period of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Support related to up to date and trustworthy information, strategies on coping, access to medical and psychiatric care, referral and information assisted the clients to navigate this new terrain.