

# **The Understanding of People Living with HIV in Northern NSW about ‘Shared Care’: A qualitative study**

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## **Background:**

People living with HIV (PLWH) in regional New South Wales (NSW) have limited access to General Practitioners (GP) able to prescribe antiretrovirals and rely more on HIV specialists. HIV has become a chronic condition in an ageing population with increased comorbidities. Therefore, GP involvement is vital for the best patient outcomes. This is best managed with a co-ordinated approach between a GP and HIV specialist, known as shared care. This study aimed to explore what PLWH understand about shared care.

## **Methods:**

This was a qualitative study with thirteen semi-structured interviews with PLWH. Recruitment was via convenience sampling and snowballing. Interviews and transcriptions were conducted by four trained medical students. Inductive analysis of coding and theme development was conducted on NVivo.

## **Results:**

Major outcomes of the study were: 1) poor knowledge of the term shared care; 2) participant’s understanding of the need for multiple practitioners; 3) participant’s recognition that effective communication is necessary for optimal delivery of care; 4) understanding of the roles of care providers and their relational factors to encourage engagement with their care.

## **Conclusion:**

Shared care is poorly understood, and alternative terminology should be considered. Patient education around the role and benefit of GPs would improve care for PLWH. GPs should undergo training to better address issues of stigma, mental health, and historical trauma of HIV diagnosis pre-2000 to acknowledge the unique experiences of this population, enhance patient relationships and encourage PLWH to increase engagement with their care.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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