

Australia sets standards for HIV peer support in clinical practice

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Background/Purpose

HIV peer support is widely regarded by people living with HIV (PLHIV) as fundamental to our acceptance of status and healthy growth as individuals. It has a long history in Australia's community-led response to HIV, and the Eighth National HIV Strategy highlights its importance as a key strategy for achieving 95-95-95 goals. NAPWHA has developed *Australian HIV Peer Support Standards* that define its core rationale, competencies, outcomes and indicators.

Approach

We partnered with Living Positive Victoria and Queensland Positive People, which have well-developed 'peer navigator' programs that offer structured peer support.

Development of the standards drew on NAPWHA's consultation networks as well as insights and experience from our partner organisations.

Outcomes/Impact

Evidence shows that PLHIV with peer support are more likely to actively engage in their own healthcare, embrace and adhere to medication, and enjoy better mental health.

Innovation

Defining the work of peer support allows the uptake of this practice beyond its traditional home in community-based organisations. It may permit high-caseload clinics, hospital and primary health networks to employ their own peer support workers and navigators.

The *Standards* outline how this workforce should be trained and supported, how support can be tailored for local communities and priority populations, and how the service can be monitored and evaluated. Coupled with national accredited training that is currently being developed by NAPWHA, and with support from some of Australia's most admired HIV clinicians, the stage is set for us to upskill and integrate the HIV positive peer within the primary healthcare team.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

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