

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF A NEGLECTED SUB-POPULATION: ASIAN-BORN MEN LIVING WITH HIV IN AUSTRALIA

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Background/Purpose:

Significant HIV prevention gaps affect Asian-born men who have sex with men (MSM) in Australia (Aung et al, [2020](#); Phillips, [2022](#)). This creates an urgent need to understand and respond to the needs and health literacy of Asian-born people with HIV in Australia to address prevention, healthcare engagement and quality of life. NAPWHA identified an opportunity to invest in the capacity of this community to engage in research and to challenge the perception that they are ‘hard-to-reach.’

Approach:

The Positive Asian Network Australia (PANA) was established as a peer-led community mobilisation initiative. A key initiative involved collaborating as co-researchers on HIV Futures’ in-depth interviews with positive Asian people.

Outcomes/Impact:

We undertook a root cause analysis of findings from consultation that identified a lack of representation in health promotion and community spaces as a key concern.

This results from under-engagement of positive Asian people in research practices and findings, which feeds ongoing cycles of invisibility throughout policy, services, and community, leading to unmet needs for HIV prevention, care and support.

A key outcome was building capacity among PANA members to participate in research as key informants, recruiters, and interviewers. This depended on developing community organising skills, interpersonal networks, funding opportunities, and supporting the wellbeing of participants.

The outcome highlights the value of investing in the capacity of communities to engage in research initiatives, and demonstrates mechanisms for disrupting cycles of invisibility.

Innovation and Significance:

Using a systems approach combining a root cause analysis and an ecological framework enables us to identify the causal cycles that contribute to the under-representation of positive Asian-born MSM in research and health promotion. The findings confirm the importance of local knowledge and community engagement. Positive Asian-born men bring unique insights, knowledge and expertise that are essential for Australia’s efforts to end HIV as a public health threat by 2030.

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