

QUALITY OF LIFE IN PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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Background: HIV is considered a chronic and manageable condition due to effective antiretroviral treatment (ART). People living with HIV (PLHIV) are able to lead long and productive lives, yet their quality of life (QoL) has been reported to be worse compared to people without HIV. A study to investigate stigma and discrimination in PLHIV was undertaken in New Zealand in 2019-2020 which provided an opportunity to measure and investigate factors associated with QoL.

Methods: Participants living with HIV aged over 16, recruited through a variety of means, were interviewed in-person by an interviewer also living with HIV. “The People Living with HIV Stigma Index” was used as well as the quality of life PozQoL scale. The 13 PozQoL questions were re-coded according to instructions and summed to give a score between 13 and 65. Socio-demographic, health and psychological factors were investigated using unadjusted and multiple linear regression models and 95% confidence intervals (CI) generated.

Results: A total of 188 PLHIV participated. The average age was 47 years, 65% were men, and 60% identified as gay, bisexual or men who have sex with men. Fifty-six percent were of European ethnicity, 20% Māori, and the remainder of other ethnic groups (9% African, 8% Asian, 4% Middle Eastern/Latin American, 3% Pasifika). The average summary PozQoL score was 47.16. Preliminary results showed the inability to meet basic needs (-4.96; 95%CI -8.23,-1.64), fair/poor health status (-4.68; 95%CI -7.87,-1.49), internalised stigma (-2.37; 95%CI -3.10,-1.63), and deciding not to have sex (-5.23; 95%CI -8.26,-2.20) were all associated with lower QoL scores. Similarly men (-3.38; 95%CI -6.18,-0.58) and being a person of an “other” ethnicity (-4.68; 95%CI -8.06,-1.31) had lower QoL.

Conclusion: Greater physical and psychological support is needed for PLHIV to ensure their QoL is improved and maintained, as well as targeting support towards specific groups of PLHIV who are more vulnerable.

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