

## RE-EXAMINING OUR DEFINITION AND ESTIMATES OF RETENTION IN CARE

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### **Background:**

Global definitions of retention in care (attending at least two medical visits in 12 months, at least 90 days apart) are used to monitor and improve country-based responses to this aspect of the HIV Treatment Cascade. This metric is generally achievable for people living with HIV (PLHIV) who are stable. With an ageing population, co-morbidities and associated 'complexity' are increasingly common and require specialist integrated management. HIV medical specialists often recommend individualised schedules of more frequent visits for this 'complex' cohort, adherence to which offers optimal holistic management and improves overall quality of life.

### **Methods:**

A 12-month retrospective file review was completed for PLHIV attending The Albion Centre (Albion) between February and April 2017. Attendance was compared to global definitions of retention and individualised schedules, determined by HIV staff specialists at each follow-up visit based on their physical and psychosocial needs. Clients were also rated according to the Clinical Complexity Rating Scale for HIV (CCRS-HIV). The target cohort is those who met global definitions of retention but failed to attend medical follow-up visits as recommended by their HIV specialist.

### **Results:**

Preliminary results suggest that while a high percentage of Albion clients are considered retained in care according to global definitions, considerably fewer are attending follow-up medical reviews as recommended by their doctor. This cohort also routinely achieved higher scores on the CCRS-HIV, suggesting more 'complex' presentations requiring more intensive support and follow-up.

### **Conclusion:**

Consistent with 2017 World Health Organisation guidelines, individualised schedules of retention appear most relevant to a cohort of PLHIV presenting with complex co-morbidities. Holistic care encompassing psychosocial as well as physical components of health increasingly impacts HIV management. Failure to account for these risks an overly simplified definition and estimate of retention in care, which may skew Australia's ongoing response to the epidemic.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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