

MEASURING QUALITY OF LIFE TO INFORM THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL HIV RESPONSE: INFORMATION FROM HIV FUTURES 9

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Background: Good quality of life (QoL) is central to the wellbeing of people living with HIV (PLHIV). While being an important public health priority in itself, good QoL among PLHIV is desirable to ensure successful HIV clinical management, treatment and HIV prevention. The 8th National HIV Strategy in Australia aims for 75% of PLHIV reporting good quality of life by 2022. The HIV Futures survey is the central data source that informs progress against this target. In this paper, we outline the ways QoL is measured in HIV Futures and present findings related to QoL from the 2019 HIV Futures 9 study.

Methods: HIV Futures 9 was a cross-sectional, self-reported survey of adults living with HIV in Australia (N=847). Data were collected in 2018/2019 via a questionnaire completed online or in hardcopy which covered a range of topics including health, financial security and social connectedness. QoL was measured using the PozQol scale, a 13-item scale developed in Australia specifically to measure QoL among PLHIV. Descriptive and bivariate analysis were used to identify factors which support QoL.

Results: The PozQol scale measures QoL using a scale of 1-5, with scores of 3.0 or higher indicating self-reported quality of life as 'good': 63.1% (n=492) of respondents reported a score of 3.0 or higher. Lower QoL was associated with concerns about current or future ill-health, and the negative impact of HIV-related stigma on wellbeing. Being employed, a higher income, greater social connectedness, and interaction with other PLHIV were associated with higher QoL.

Conclusion: To reach the target of 75% of PLHIV reporting good QoL, there needs to be a focus on supporting social connectedness among PLHIV. Investment in peer and social programs as well as employment support will provide social connection and help to mitigate the negative impact of stigma.

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