

MOBILISING COMMUNITY AMONG HETEROSEXUAL MEN LIVING WITH HIV IN AUSTRALIA

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Background/Purpose:

HIV notifications among heterosexual men have been increasing over the past decade, particularly among Australian-born males (Kirby, [2018](#)). The Health Literacy Framework project established a network of heterosexual men to articulate their health literacy needs across the HIV care continuum.

Approach:

The Heterosexual Men's Advocacy Network Australia (HetMAN) involves HIV peers working in tandem with NAPWHA to co-design community engagement initiatives. Community advocates conducted semi-structured interviews with peer networks (n=12) to investigate health literacy gaps, enablers and opportunities. Findings informed a range of health literacy initiatives targeting and tailored for heterosexual men. One example includes a peer-networking group event with participants from Sub-Saharan African background living in South Australia.

Outcomes/Impact:

Quality of life needs for participants extend far beyond early treatment initiation and reaching viral undetectability. Participants relayed they were still struggling to achieve wellbeing despite being healthy and on treatment.

Key concerns include lack of representation in health promotion initiatives, and a need for community spaces enabling peer connection and discussions about disclosure and relationships in particular.

Participants shared insights into the role of stigma (including internalised stigma, fears of disclosure, isolation, loneliness) in affecting their quality of life. Addressing health issues besides HIV requires disclosing their status to non-HIV care providers and this creates a sense of vulnerability to stigma and discrimination.

Innovation and Significance:

The Health Literacy Framework project uses an ecological framework to conceptualise how NAPWHA's own process of organisational learning about the individual health literacy needs of heterosexual men living with HIV can inform learning and development at the wider community, sectoral, and societal levels.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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