

# EARLY IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCEPTABILITY OF LONG-ACTING CABOTEGRAVIR AND RILPIVIRINE TREATMENT AMONG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS: BASELINE FINDINGS FROM THE ICAROS STUDY

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## Background:

In Australia, long-acting cabotegravir and rilpivirine (LA-CAB/RPV) was approved and PBS-subsidised for HIV treatment in April 2022. This study aimed to understand initial perceptions of LA-CAB/RPV treatment acceptability among people with HIV and healthcare workers.

## Methods:

From June 2023-April 2024, we recruited individuals prescribed, and healthcare workers who administered, LA-CAB/RPV from primary and tertiary clinics, and the community. We report findings from baseline surveys, with 6-monthly follow-up surveys planned.

## Results:

In total, 50 LA-CAB/RPV treatment recipients were recruited, with 35 (70.0%) enrolled at primary care centres. All were assigned male sex at birth, 48 (96.0%) identified as gay/bisexual men, and 3 (6.0%) reported injecting drug use. Most common reasons for switching to LA-CAB/RPV were - general interest in new treatments (54.0%), convenience for travelling (46.0%), not worrying about forgetting to take medication (40.0%) and not having a daily reminder of HIV (40.0%). The most commonly reported treatment concerns were injection-site pain (54.0%) and not sustaining viral suppression (50.0%). Most (53.2%) reported their LA-CAB/RPV initiation clinic visit took <30 minutes, with 8.5% reporting >60 minutes; 95.7% found the time taken acceptable. Thirty-five healthcare workers respondents included GPs (34.3%), GP/community nurses (25.7%), hospital nurses (22.9%) and hospital doctors (14.3%). Top concerns for prescribing and administering LA-CAB/RPV were staff resourcing (48.6%), patients failing treatment due to missed visits (42.9%), risk of treatment failures with resistance (40.0%) and rescheduling missed visits within the recommended window period (40.0%).

## Conclusion:

Novelty, convenience and not being reminded daily of their HIV status were the primary reasons for switching to LA-CAB/RPV, however some had concerns about side effects and efficacy. Many healthcare workers shared concerns and treatment efficacy in addition to the logistics of delivering LA-CAB/RPV. Continued monitoring of LA-CAB/RPV uptake, and its impact on quality of life, will be important for informing its wider implementation in Australia.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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