

LINKAGE TO CLINICAL CARE: PWHIV PERSPECTIVES

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Background: New guidelines for the clinical management of HIV in Australia were introduced in 2013, following new scientific evidence about the management of HIV. To maximise the health and prevention benefits of HIV treatments all People Living with HIV (PWHIV) need to be linked to and maintained in care. In 2015 there were an estimated 3,350 people in Australia who were unaware of their HIV status and 6,330 people who were aware of their HIV status but not on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART). Further, evidence shows that of those in care not all are experiencing optimal care. This paper investigates the reasons why some care relationships are unable to retain PWHIV in optimal care, from the perspective of PWHIV.

Methods: Interviews were conducted with 15 PWHIV who had become disconnected from care in the past 5 years. The interviews explored treatment breaks, experiences of clinical care and the mechanisms through which participants reconnected with care.

Results: The interviews revealed a range of factors associated with disconnection from treatment and care including ageing, psycho-social pressures linked to living long term with HIV, the quality of clinical care and instances of discrimination experienced at point-of-care. Some participants were unaware or unconvinced by current scientific evidence in relation to HIV management.

Conclusion: The findings of this research identify the need for additional health promotion and follow up mechanisms to support linkage to care. Further, there continues to be a need for community accessible information about the current scientific evidence in relation to health and ART. This information is needed as some PWHIV continue to perceive HIV medicine as experimental and uncertain.

Disclosure of interest statement

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