

# **Title: Evaluation of a novel group mentor program for new and low caseload HIV s100 prescribers in Victoria: mentor and mentee perspectives informing future mentoring approaches**

## **Authors:**

Olga Vujovic<sup>1,2</sup>, Lisa Fitzgerald<sup>3</sup>, Kate Hannan<sup>3</sup>, Allyson Mutch<sup>3</sup>, Bernard Gardiner<sup>4</sup>, Naomi Cooper<sup>4</sup>, Mark O'Reilly<sup>5,6</sup>, Melanie Bissessor<sup>7,8</sup>, Matt Penn<sup>9</sup>, Emma Paige<sup>1</sup>.

1. Department of Infectious Diseases, Bayside Health, Melbourne, Australia
2. Department of Infectious Diseases, School of Translational Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
3. School of Public Health, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
4. North West Melbourne PHN, Melbourne, Australia
5. East Sydney Doctors, Sydney, Australia
6. Taylor Square Private Clinic, Sydney, Australia
7. Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Bayside Health, Melbourne, Australia
8. Thorne Harbour Health, Melbourne, Australia
9. Access Health and Community, Melbourne, Australia

## **Background/Purpose:**

General and nurse practitioner HIV s100 prescribers play a critical role in providing community-based HIV care. Since 2015 s100 prescriber numbers have increased but the majority are sole prescribers or in low-caseload settings. The shift to online learning during Covid-19 further isolated new prescribers with limited access to peers or mentors. The consequent demand for mentor support has proven challenging for the existing mentor pool. Our aim was to address these gaps through an online group mentor program (GMP).

## **Approach:**

Adapting the well-established Victorian HIV s100 case discussion series, the GMP was developed and piloted for 18 months during 2022-2023. Participants were allocated to groups and mentors for quarterly online sessions. Content was participant-led (pre-submitted de-identified cases). Pathways for inter-session support were also provided. An external evaluation examined whether connecting prescribers and mentors in a community of practice would improve prescriber satisfaction and retention. The evaluation included analysis of de-identified session transcripts and interviews with mentees and mentors.

## **Outcomes/Impact:**

26 participants and four mentors participated in 15 sessions. Analysis of sessions demonstrated significant breadth and depth of topics. Participation in sessions and retention was impacted by current caseload. Mentees valued in-depth case study discussions but contributing case presentations was a barrier for prescribers with zero/low caseload. Tensions between needs for foundational vs advanced content was also a challenge for some mentees. Mentors valued the structured learning environment recognising participants' knowledge/skills as valuable resources for learning. Mentors reflected on their own skillset, particularly the process of unpacking a complex case and ensuring accessible learning points.

## **Innovation and Significance:**

The first formal evaluation of a group mentor program for HIV s100 prescribers in Australia yields key themes to inform future programs including: importance of connection with peers and mentors; mentees' diverse needs; HIV caseloads as a barrier to participation and retention in training and clinical practice.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

Nil