

“IS IT HIV OR JUST OLD AGE?” UNCERTAINTIES OF ‘SUCCESSFUL’ AGEING WITH HIV

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Background: Around half of all people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Australia are now over 50. Understanding ‘successful’ ageing for PLHIV is critical for researchers, policy makers and service providers.

Methods: Living Positive in Queensland (LPQ), is a participatory qualitative longitudinal study that examined ageing in people living long term with HIV. 73 participants completed three annual in-depth interviews, resulting in over 200 transcripts. Thematic analysis was undertaken. This presentation discusses key findings of their perceptions and experiences of ageing.

Results: Participants described uncertainty about ageing, expressing ambivalence in the face of debates surrounding adverse HIV ageing discourses and unknown futures. Alongside uncertainties about health and increasing comorbidities, participants described uncertainty about social determinants of ‘successful ageing’. Older participants, particularly those from the Pre-HAART era, experienced disadvantage related to disrupted employment trajectories, limited resources and/or being long-term welfare recipients. This, combined with limited support, generated worries about living in disadvantage as they got older, particularly as many participants had been impacted by service cuts and the corresponding fracturing of communities.

Care for older people was synonymous with residential aged care. Having experienced stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings, many were concerned about stigma and discrimination in aged care settings and worried that the aged care sector was not ready to respond to the needs of PLHIV. Some of the most vulnerable participants described ‘back up plans’ of treatment non-adherence when confronted with accessing aged care.

Conclusion: Ageing with HIV is biosocial, lived within diverse intersections of embodied experiences of HIV, generational, social, and locational contexts. ‘Successful ageing’ must move beyond individual actions and acknowledge the role of social determinants of health. HIV and ageing literacy; quality and culturally competent aged care services for PLHIV; and coordination and partnership between the aged care sector and HIV communities are urgently needed.

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