

Assessing understandings and perceptions of HIV Cure among Peer Navigators and Treatment Officers in Australia

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Background/Purpose: Community understanding of HIV cure science is critical for the meaningful engagement of people with HIV (PHIV) in clinical trials aimed at curing HIV. The National Association of People Living with HIV Australia (NAPWHA) Treatment Outreach Network (TON) is a group of peer educators from the HIV community sector workforce who engage with PHIV to provide health and treatment information. TON members were surveyed prior to the Australian HIV/AIDS Conference in 2022, which found limited knowledge of HIV cure science and varying interest in trial participation. This intervention aimed to improve and then evaluate understanding of HIV cure research, with an educational workshop.

Methods: Attendees of the NAPWHA TON meeting participated in a 75-minute workshop focused on HIV cure research in November 2022. This included a presentation on the basics of HIV cure science and a discussion with a participant who has completed an HIV cure trial. After a question-and-answer session, participants were invited to complete an anonymous online survey about their perspectives on HIV cure research. This survey is identical to the previously conducted survey.

Outcomes/Impact: Survey responses demonstrated an improvement in understanding of HIV cure science and increased willingness to participate in interventional clinical trials after the workshop. Concerns around interrupting HIV treatment and detrimental impacts on health were identified as barriers to participation. Altruism was a motivator to enrol in HIV cure trials, along with endorsement from a trusted member of community.

Innovation and Significance: Treatment officers and peer educators are critical sources of information about HIV cure research for PHIV, and efforts must be made to engage them in research activities.

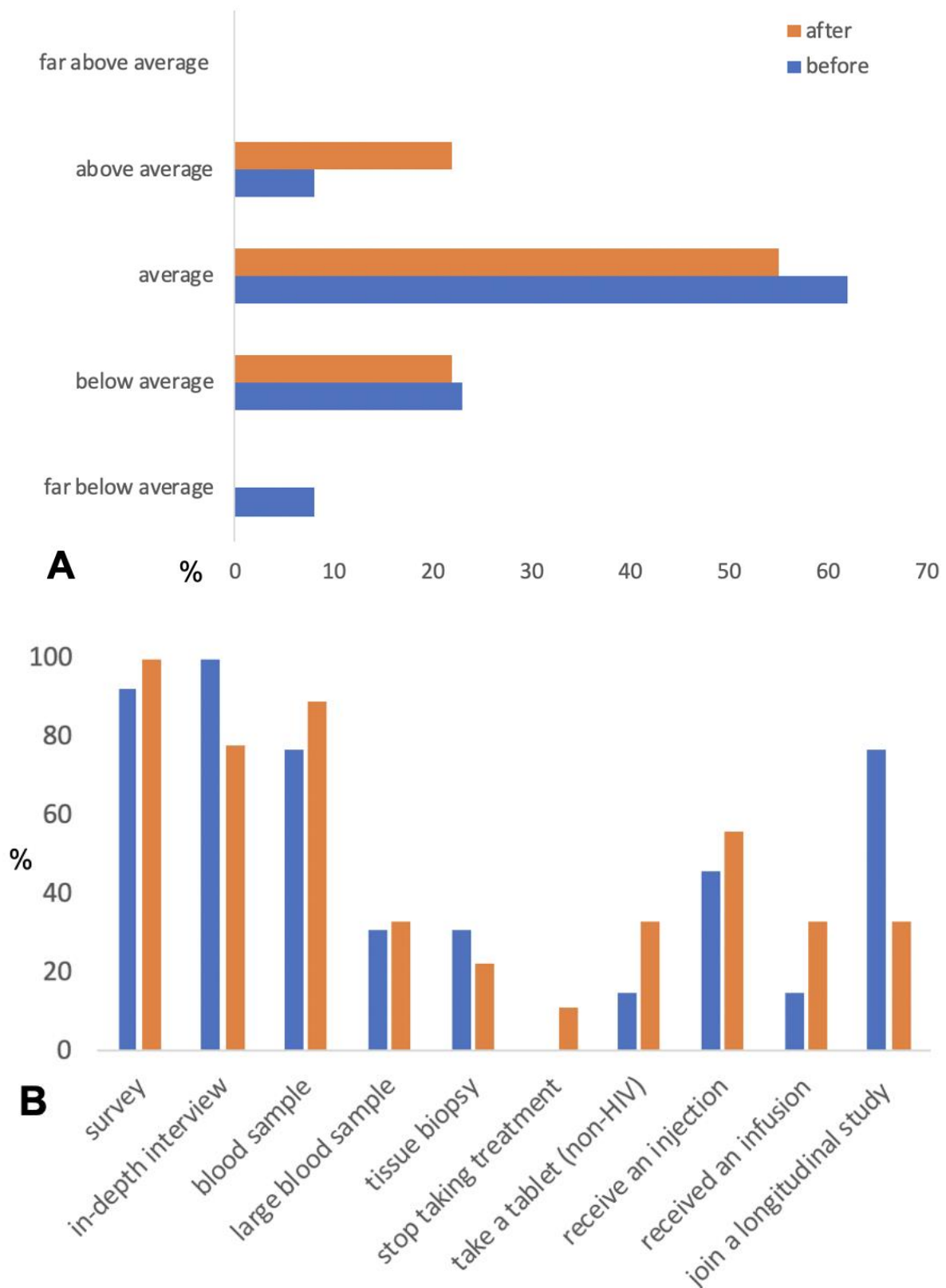


Figure 1: A) Perceived understandings of HIV cure science increased following the interactive educational workshop; **B)** Peer Navigator willingness to participate different types of HIV cure research

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