

YOUNG + POSITIVE: EMERGING PERSPECTIVES FROM THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN AUSTRALIA

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Background:

As the science and politics of HIV has changed, so too has the lived experience of people living with HIV (PLHIV). Young people diagnosed with HIV today receive a dramatically different prognosis than earlier eras, both in terms of health and hopefully also the social stigma associated with the virus. There is, however, little research that has documented the perspectives of young people themselves regarding their experiences of living with HIV in Australia today.

Methods:

This presentation will report on qualitative data collected for the Young + Positive project, the first in Australia to document the firsthand accounts of young PLHIV (aged 18-29) regarding their HIV and related support needs. Although the study is mixed method, including an online survey and semi-structured interviews, this presentation will describe key themes in the interview data which reveals how this population understands and relates to their health, and their experiences of HIV and non-HIV-related services and supports.

Results:

As at May 2018, interviews had been conducted with 13 young people, aged 22 to 29 and spanning different gender, sexuality and cultural identities. Interviews will continue to be conducted throughout the year. Preliminary findings include the notable isolation described by those participants who were not engaged with formal supports, or with HIV positive community, in a meaningful way. While broad satisfaction was reported regarding engagement with clinical services, all participants described feeling continuously challenged by the psychosocial aspects of living with HIV as a young person in Australia.

Conclusion:

The Young + Positive study fills an important gap in our understanding of the needs and experiences of those who are growing into early adulthood with HIV. Their insights should be consulted in designing HIV clinical and social support services, as well as policy and advocacy work, which engages young people.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

There are no conflicts of interest to disclose.