

# **Hidden in Plain Sight? Creating a culturally-appropriate peer navigation model to facilitate engagement with people living with HIV from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**

**Authors:** Njeri P<sup>1</sup>, Costello J<sup>1</sup>, Heslop A<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Positive Life NSW

## **Background/Purpose:**

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people born overseas have been identified as an emerging priority population in the current NSW HIV Strategy. Members of these diverse communities are often categorised as 'hard-to-reach/hidden'. There are few culturally-appropriate, nuanced peer-based programs to engage people around health-seeking behaviours, facilitate engagement with healthcare services and address stigma and discrimination. In order to address some of these challenges in heterosexually-identifying CALD PLHIV, Positive Life NSW has created a discrete peer-support program led by experienced peer navigators from CALD backgrounds.

## **Approach:**

Positive Life NSW (PLNSW) adapted a peer navigation model to build capacity of CALD PLHIV utilising Peer Navigators to role-model and share their lived experiences, improving the health, quality of life outcomes and increasing health literacy and capacity of CALD PLHIV to self-advocate. Engaging Peer Navigators from the CALD community has provided a deeper understanding of culture and remains agile yet sensitive to the developing needs of this priority population. CALD Community Peer Navigators use a range of different tools and modes of communication to address social isolation, stigma/discrimination, system navigation, peer support and program follow-up.

## **Outcomes/Impact:**

Increasing engagement of CALD PLHIV into Peer Navigation services delivered by PLNSW, and ongoing community consultation have increased our reach and rapport within these diverse and marginalised communities. CALD Peer Navigation supports the physical, emotional, social and psycho-social well-being of CALD PLHIV by increasing self-confidence; supporting CALD PLHIV to have agency in their own healthcare decisions, and address social determinants, loneliness, connection, and retention into healthcare.

## **Innovation and Significance:**

Being sensitive to and addressing the peer support needs of CALD PLHIV increases community members acceptance of HIV and raises awareness of multi-morbidities through peer education and role modelling. Peer Navigation strengthens CALD PLHIV communities, reduces the effects of stigma and discrimination, encourages active health dialogue and supports the current NSW HIV Strategy.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):**

Nothing to declare.