

Peer Navigation referrals for older gay men: A collaborative pathway to resilience and well-being

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Background/Purpose:

In 2024, the NSW Ministry of Health provided funding to support a 12-month contracted peer navigator (PN) position in the existing Peer Navigation Program (PNP) at Positive Life NSW (PLNSW). Working closely with older GBMSM community members from diverse backgrounds and receiving referrals from a range of services, PLNSW identified supplementary ways of working and addressed a range of issues beyond those identified at referral, which detrimentally affect the quality of life (QOL) of community members receiving PNP support.

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Approach:

Referrals to PLNSW's PNP made through this project were primarily for counselling, social inclusion, and employment and vocational assistance. After an initial intake and assessment, PLNSW was able to identify supplementary peer support assistance and referrals related to housing, health, government system navigation, mental health, occupational therapy, cosmetic surgery, survivors of torture and trauma, financial stress, hoarding/squalor, and migration, resulting in onward referrals to appropriate services.

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Outcomes/Impact:

Through a structured PNP framework the ability of PNs to connect with, and source supplementary referral pathways where necessary to improve health and wellbeing, positively assisted PN consumers who appreciated compassionate and holistic approaches to their overall wellbeing. Being able to share their lived experiences with a PN who was able to contextualise a range of issues and provide appropriate support to improve their overall quality of life proved impactful in delivering PN support.

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Innovation and Significance:

Peer Navigation is more than just an outlet for peer-based support and can radically improve quality of life outcomes for older gay men living with HIV who often require targeted and specialist referral support and management as they continue to age and thrive into the future. Peer Navigation seen holistically as both an outlet for interaction, and a method of primary referral, sees many benefits for older gay men living with HIV.

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Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

Positive Life NSW recognises with gratitude the effort and passion of the community of people living with HIV in NSW.

Positive Life NSW receives funding from the NSW Ministry of Health. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the delivery of this program

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Short Bio – Roberto Fabbiano

As a Peer Support Officer for Positive Life NSW, Roberto is responsible for supporting all people living with HIV across the metropolitan and regional NSW to navigate and access options that support the community to maintain their health and wellbeing.