

Women living with HIV in Australia: development of a clinical monitoring tool to address gender-specific care gaps

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Background

Women living with HIV (WLHIV) experience a complex intersection of reproductive health needs, age-related comorbidities, mental health conditions, and psychosocial challenges often unaddressed by their HIV clinicians. Following our clinical audit which identified such care gaps in the routine management of WLHIV attending our sexual health service in Sydney 2021-2023, we collaborated with Australia's peak organisation of HIV health professionals, the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM), to develop a clinical reference tool specifically for managing WLHIV.

Method

The existing ASHM HIV Monitoring Tool was adapted to include extra sections on reproductive health (menstruation, preconception, contraception, menopause, breast and cervical cancer screening) and psychosocial aspects (carer status, sex industry work and safety, intimate partner violence screening) with links to useful reproductive health resources and peer support organisations for WLHIV in Australia.

Recommendations in our tool are based on current international HIV and reproductive health guidelines from Canada, UK, USA, and Europe; as well as national primary care guidelines from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Cancer Council Australia, and Australian Immunisation Handbook.

Results

As a result of calling for improved Australian clinical guidance on management of WLHIV, we have produced a holistic women-centred clinical tool based on current existing international and national clinical guidelines for routine monitoring of WLHIV.

Conclusion

Implementation of this tool will support HIV clinicians in Australia to address the biopsychosocial health needs of WLHIV across the life course.

Disclosure of interest statement: None.