

A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMMEDIATE PRESCRIBING OF ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY AT TIME OF AN HIV DIAGNOSIS (ARTatD)

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Background/Purpose:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2017 published 'Guidelines for Managing Advanced HIV Disease and Rapid Initiation of Antiretroviral Therapy', supporting evidence that prescribing antiretroviral therapy (ART) at the time of HIV diagnosis (ARTatD) may be beneficial. Further evidence arises from the Strategic Timing of Antiretroviral Therapy (START) study and from clinical programs e.g. RAPID Program at San Francisco General Hospital. The START Study shows improved outcomes for all body systems affected by HIV including cardiovascular, lower risk of chronic kidney disease (CKD) and ARTatD may reduce the populating of viral reservoirs within the central nervous system (CNS) at the time of infection.

Approach:

To gauge community support for immediate commencement of ARTatD, Positive Life NSW (PLNSW) distributed an anonymous online survey to assess:

- The demographics and HIV status of respondents
- Attitudes supporting ARTatD if it was recommended
- Concerns and problems envisaged with a recommendation of ARTatD
- What would influence a decision to commence ARTatD.

Outcomes/Impact:

The survey received 833 responses from Australian born (69%) and from overseas born (31%) respondents, with an age range 18 to >75 years whom identified as male (96%), female (2%), non-binary (1%) and other (1%). Of these, 76% supported ARTatD if it was available, 9% did not support ARTatD and 15% were unsure.

Innovation and Significance:

Those identifying ARTatD as being most beneficial identified their reasons as: if the doctor recommended it; giving a sense of control; protecting sexual partners; and protecting the unborn baby for pregnant women. Those not supporting ARTatD identified: needing time to adjust; making sure of the diagnosis; and ensuring prescribed medication was correct. The outcome of this survey will inform how those at the time of a diagnosis will need to be supported if ARTatD becomes the standard recommendation.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

No disclosure of interests.