

# **The intersection of HIV and migration: conceptualising quality of life among Asian-born men who have sex with men living with HIV in Australia**

## **Authors:**

Norman, T.<sup>1</sup>, Power, J.<sup>1</sup>, Chen, J.<sup>2</sup>, Ferguson, N.<sup>1,3</sup>, Canita, E.<sup>4</sup>, Istiko, S.N.<sup>5,6</sup>, Xiao, B.J.<sup>7</sup>, Rule, J.<sup>2</sup>, Murphy, D.<sup>1</sup>, & Bourne, A.<sup>1,8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Victoria, Australia, <sup>2</sup>National Association of People with HIV Australia, New South Wales, Australia, <sup>3</sup>Department of Public Health, La Trobe University, Victoria, Australia, <sup>4</sup>Living Positive Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, <sup>5</sup>University of Queensland, Queensland, Australia, <sup>6</sup>Bradford Institute for Health Research, Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Bradford Royal Infirmary, Bradford, United Kingdom, <sup>7</sup>ACON, New South Wales, Australia, <sup>8</sup>Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, New South Wales, Australia Research Centre for Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University

## **Background:**

Improving quality of life (QoL) among people living with HIV is a key objective of Australia's Ninth National HIV Strategy 2024-2030. This qualitative study aimed to understand how migration experiences shape wellbeing and quality of life for Asian-born men who have sex with men (MSM) who are living with HIV in Australia, and to identify relevant support needs.

## **Methods:**

Drawing from intersectionality theory, this paper reports findings from semi-structured interviews with Asian-born MSM (n=9), as well as key informants working in the HIV sector (n=9, total n=18). Data were analysed using an inductive thematic technique focused on the intersections of structural racism/migration, homophobia/sexuality, and living with HIV and experiences of HIV-related stigma.

## **Results:**

Participants described multiple ways in which QoL can be diminished in the context of the intersecting experiences of migrating to Australia and living with HIV. This includes: (i) greater uncertainty of visa outcomes due to HIV diagnosis, difficulty in navigating the complex migration processes required for PLHIV, reduced feelings of agency, and financial pressures ('living in limbo'), and (ii) complexities in social and relationship dynamics due to racism, HIV-related stigma and discrimination ('fear of rejection and disclosure'). However, participants also described positive experiences that marked significant personal and cultural strength, such as (iii) a newfound focus on health and wellbeing, the ability to more openly express their sexuality, and a cultivation of self-confidence to advocate for themselves and others ('navigating the politics of belonging').

## **Conclusion:**

The findings of this study highlight unique structural and social challenges to QoL that migration and living with HIV can generate. These findings signal a need to redouble efforts within the HIV response to advance QoL for people living with HIV in a manner that is affirming, comprehensive, and draws on cultural strengths.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

This work was supported by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.