

The role of sexual health services in the linkage to HBV care: Insights from migrant gay and bisexual men and commercial sex workers

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Background: HBV research has predominantly centred on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and immigrant communities. While sexual contact has been recognised as a transmission route, prior studies have often overlooked the intricate aspects of sexuality and relationships among individuals living with HBV. Notably, the lived experiences of marginalised groups like gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) and commercial sex workers (CSWs) have been underrepresented in HBV qualitative studies. This study aims to understand the intersectional experiences of migrant GBMSM and CSWs living with HBV and the role played by sexual health services (SHS) in their treatment and care.

Methods: Between February and August 2023, in-depth interviews were conducted with 14 migrant GBMSM and CSWs living with HBV, most of whom were Asian-born, recruited from a major sexual health service in Sydney that also provided in-house specialist HBV management.

Findings: Thematic analysis identified three key themes: 1) navigating the Australian healthcare system, 2) the impact of HBV on sexual practices, and 3) the crucial role of SHS. Participants encountered obstacles such as language barriers and unfamiliarity with the healthcare system, with many concerned about how HBV might affect their visa status and legal residency. Experiences of HBV stigma varied. While many did not consider HBV a concern during sex, some CSWs adopted more cautious approaches to protect their clients. GBMSM highlighted the dual benefits of PrEP for HBV treatment and HIV prevention, reducing transmission concerns and enabling active sexual lives. For many participants, SHS acted as a vital entry point for HBV care, providing a safe environment for discussing sensitive issues related to HBV and sexual health, which participants found difficult to address elsewhere.

Conclusion: SHS play a crucial role in delivering person-centred care and supporting the unique, intersectional experiences of GBMSM and CSWs living with HBV.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to the study presented in this abstract.