

Clinical needs and barriers to health service access among PLHIV in Australia: A latent profile analysis approach

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Background:

Advances in medical treatment are driving major changes in HIV policy and practice, including increasing and maintaining uptake of antiretroviral treatment (ART). While Australia already has a high level of ART use among PLHIV, long-term maintenance of ART use requires better understanding of clinical needs of hard-to-reach and vulnerable sub-groups, ensuring that those needs are addressed. The aim of the current study was to identify sub-groups of PLHIV in Australia with different health needs and capacity to access clinical services.

Methods:

Analyses were based on data from 895 PLHIV collected in a national survey of PLHIV in Australia (HIV Futures 8). Latent Profile Analysis was used to identify PLHIV with similar health needs and capacity to access clinical services. Profiles were based on the level of reported general and mental health, current ART experience, co-medication, time since diagnosis and health literacy (capacity to engage with healthcare providers and navigate the healthcare system).

Results:

Five profiles of PLHIV with different health needs and health literacy levels were identified: 'good health-high health literacy' (35%), 'good health-moderate health literacy' (25%), 'poor health-high health literacy' (17%), 'poor health-moderate health literacy' (17%), and 'moderate health-poor health literacy' (7%). Profiles varied further with respect to complexity of health needs (time since diagnosis, co-medication), past experiences, and financial, psychological and geographical barriers to healthcare access.

Conclusion:

This study adopts a novel person-centred approach to the study of health needs of PLHIV, revealing that health status does not always align with capacity to navigate health services. Our results can help clinicians and community sector better understand and engage with the diversity of their clients. They can also help advocate for policy and service changes so that the differing needs of the identified groups are met.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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