

Ageing Well with HIV: Psychosocial Concerns and Needs Among People Living with HIV aged 50+ in Australia.

Dawe J¹, Cassano D¹, Keane R², Wilkinson A¹, Gunn J¹, Elsum I¹, S. Ruth³, H. von Doussa⁴, G. Brown⁴, M. West⁵, J. Hoy⁶, J. Power⁴, M. Stoové^{1,7}

¹Burnet Institute, Public Health Discipline, Melbourne, Australia, ²Living Positive Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, ³Thorne Harbour Health, Melbourne, Australia, ⁴La Trobe University, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne, Australia, ⁵Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, ⁶School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne Australia, ⁷Department of Infectious Diseases, The Alfred Hospital and Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Background: Older PLHIV face a distinct set of challenges in ageing well, including factors related to their HIV status, sexuality, gender, and personal circumstance. To ensure support models are effective and appropriately targeted, it is important to understand the psychosocial needs and concerns of older PLHIV. Using data from a national cross-sectional survey measuring the health and wellbeing of PLHIV, we describe the psychosocial needs and concerns affecting PLHIV aged 50+.

Methods: We collected self-reported data from PLHIV aged 50+ in Australia between December 2018–May 2019 through the HIV Futures survey. Univariable descriptive analyses were used to describe the psychosocial needs and concerns of participants across four key survey domains: psychosocial wellbeing; support seeking and peer support; stigma and discrimination; and future concerns.

Results: Among the 319 participants, the median age was 59 (IQR:54–65), most were male (92%), identified as gay or bisexual (86%), and resided in metropolitan areas (76%). Nearly half (43%) had been diagnosed with a mental health condition, most commonly depression (27%) and anxiety (20%). Four in five participants (83%) reported not having anybody to seek support from when required. Half of participants (49%) reported experiencing stigma related to their HIV status in the previous twelve months, and over one third (35%) reported that almost nobody knew about their HIV status. Participants commonly reported concerns about the future across multiple domains, including loneliness (58%), emotional problems (50%) and maintaining close relationships (45%).

Conclusion: Our findings show significant psychosocial needs and concerns among older PLHIV, and the need for tailored services to support older PLHIV. The needs of people ageing with HIV stretch beyond those related to clinical care and must be holistic and recognise the importance of tailored support for PLHIV as they age.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Mark Stoové is the recipient of a NHMRC Senior Research Fellowship (Commonwealth Government) and has received investigator-initiated funding from Gilead Sciences, AbbVie and Bristol Myers Squibb for work unrelated to this work. Jennifer Hoy's institution received reimbursement for her time on Advisory Boards for Gilead Sciences and ViiV Healthcare.