

A community perspective on the immediate prescribing of antiretroviral therapy at time of an HIV diagnosis (ARTatD)

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Positive Life NSW would like to acknowledge and thank the **HIV positive and HIV negative community** for their valuable support and time taken in completing the survey. The information will be used to inform policy development, service delivery and care at the time of an HIV diagnosis. The information has also provided valuable information to service providers and community organisations on the communities' views on the benefits and concerns as they relate to the commencement of antiretroviral treatment at the time of an HIV diagnosis.

Disclosures:

- No Disclosures.

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BACKGROUND/AIMS & METHODS:

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- ❖ Significant advances in the **evidence to support** the prescribing of antiretroviral therapy (ART) at the time of an HIV diagnosis (ARTatD)
 - ❖ There is little in the way of **consumers attitudes** to commencing ARTatD
 - ❖ The aim was to explore the '**communities' attitudes and views to the recommendations of ARTatD**
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- ❖ **Modified WHO survey**, 16 June to 18 July 2017 using the Survey Monkey platform.
 - ❖ **18 questions**, HIV status, demographics for age, sex, gender, ethnicity, country of birth, language spoken at home, source of income, current place of residence
 - ❖ Multiple choice or Likert scale with the opportunity to provide qualitative feedback at two points within the questionnaire
 - "If starting HIV treatment on the same day as you were diagnosed was available, would you support the practice" and at the end of the survey asking
 - "Please let us know if you have any other thoughts or comments on 'same-day' start of HIV treatments."
 - ❖ **Analysed** using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Survey Monkey basic analytics and Excel.

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RESULTS:

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- **84.9%** indicated **support** starting treatment at time of HIV diagnosis,
- **9.6%** did **not support** treatment at diagnosis
- **HIV positive, 305 (79.8%) supported ARTatD**, 54 (14.1%) did not support
- **HIV negative or unknown, 313 (90.5%) supported** starting and 16 (4.6%) did not support it and 17 (4.9%) were unsure.
- ‘Starting treatment as early as possible is **beneficial for my health**’ was identified by the **majority** of respondents 650 (80%)
- ‘Giving a **sense of control over HIV**’ was next at 546 (67%) respondents followed by
- 530 (65%) respondents who chose ‘**Protecting sexual partners**’,
- ‘**Protecting the unborn baby for pregnant women**’ 269 (33%) with
- ‘Other reasons’ on 98 (12%) responses

Link to survey results:

<http://www.positivelife.org.au/images/PDF/2018/PLNSW-ImmediateStarttoTreatment.pdf>

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CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

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Ranking important concerns:

- ‘**Being prescribed the HIV treatments that work best for you**’
- ‘**Having time to ask questions**’, and ‘**Being able to make your own decision to start**’,
- ‘**Having support from your doctor**’ and ‘**Feeling free of pressure and coercion**’ and
- ‘**Being diagnosed with another health condition**’ and ‘**Having the support to stay on treatment**’,
- ‘**Wanting to make sure mental health or substance use issues were managed before starting**’
- ‘**Needing other concerns to be addressed including housing, employment and relationships**’
- This survey **gives voice to the attitudes and support to the delivery of ARTatD** of both HIV positive and negative people within the Australian context.
- It is clear from the qualitative responses **that if a person asks for ARTatD this needs to be prescribed and the decision is to be a fully informed**, be an individual choice and not denied unless contraindicated.

“I believe, the start of the early treatment played a major part ... gave me a confidence to say that IT IS actually, NOT a death sentence, in relation to my health and physical being. And to see those significant number differences in main sections of my test results, prevented me NOT to feel and see myself as a victim and not to listen to ... my negative emotions and thoughts...”

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