HELLO COUNTRY: A METRO- RURAL PARTNERSHIP IN HIV CARE DELIVERY

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Background/Purpose:
Grampians Health (GH) covers an area of 48,500km2, and serves more than 250,000 residents. The GH Infectious Diseases (ID) Service provides ID regional physician- lead healthcare from the Ballarat Base Hospital (BBH) site. Funding constraints limit the inclusion of nurses. HIV is a chronic disease and people living with HIV (PLHIV) require routine outpatient specialist care. There are few GPs providing HIV care in the region, leaving GH ID and a community health service to provide HIV healthcare. The Victorian HIV Service, Alfred Hospital Melbourne, partners with HIV services State- wide and in response, the services developed a collaborative nurse practitioner (NP) outreach model of care.

Approach:
Pre-existing collaborative relationships between the services led to identification of service gaps suitable for an outreach HIV NP. An initial meeting in 2020 saw the preliminary development of a model of care, which was halted until 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic response and NP availability. A de-identified clinical database was subsequently developed. An honorary clinical NP appointment was facilitated at GH, with regular clinic attendance from 2024.

Outcomes/Impact:
Despite initial interruptions to the model, the NP now regularly attends fortnightly outpatient clinics, integrated within the wider GH ID outpatient service. A site-specific database was established under the Victorian HIV Service, HIV Clinical Quality Registry. An initial focus on hard- to- reach populations and people experiencing biopsychosocial barriers to accessing routine scheduled appointments saw a decrease in those considered lost- to- follow- up. A submission for an immunisation fridge was developed to support on- site immunisation and administration of injectable antiretroviral therapy, with both areas being identified as service- gaps by GH ID.

Innovation and Significance:
This model demonstrates the value of collaborative service partnerships across rural and metropolitan services, through the successful integration of a specialist NP to support local HIV care provision to PLHIV.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:
There are no disclosures for this work