

OPTIMAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN HIV

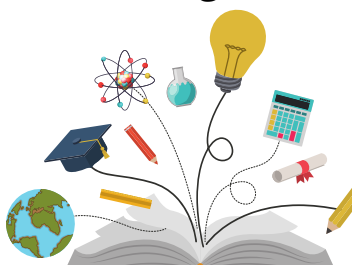
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS

BACKGROUND

is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, resulting in a chronic condition managed with antiretroviral therapy. HIV cases have been increasing over the years, thereby resulting in a growing number of people living with HIV (PLWHIV)¹. Between 2014 and 2018, there was a 25.3% increase in new diagnoses². Due to the increase in new diagnoses and people living longer, more people will require access to healthcare services on a long-term basis to maintain good health and wellbeing². PLWHIV are often faced with additional challenges including HIV-associated stigma, coming from the society, healthcare practitioners and family members. Healthcare providers have a responsibility to educate, provide support and actively engage in the care of PLWHIV to improve their quality of life. This document identifies some key issues and recommendations through 3 Calls to Action for healthcare practitioners' to support optimal health and wellbeing for PLWHIV.

1 COUNTERACT HIV-RELATED STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTHCARE

- PLWHIV face stigmatizing behaviours (hostility, fear, avoidance) in healthcare settings and may not feel comfortable revealing their HIV status to their healthcare provider (HCP)³
- Minimal HIV-specific education among HCPs leads to a lack of awareness about HIV stigma and how to combat it⁴

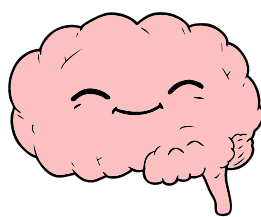


RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Develop a rapport with the patient, ensuring confidentiality^{3 4}
- ✓ Reinforce the fact that patients will not be judged for their medical history, sex or sexual orientation⁴
- ✓ Develop codes of conduct to inform HCP behaviour^{3 4}
- ✓ Ensure that ALL staff including clinical care providers and staff are educated on HIV⁴

2 INTEGRATE SERVICES FOR MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE AND NEUROCOGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT

- 50% of people living with HIV meet the criteria for one or more psychiatric disorder⁵
- 40% to 90% of mental health/substance use issues are undetected in primary care settings⁵
- HIV diagnosis affects cognition, memory, balance, mood and irritability⁵



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Watch for signs of poor mental and/or cognitive health when conducting a clinical screening⁶
- ✓ Communicate with other HCPs to provide interdisciplinary care (e.g. provide timely linkage or referral to other health and social services)⁶

3

FOCUS ON THE HEALTH OF OLDER ADULTS LIVING WITH HIV

- Various comorbidities are more prevalent in older adults living with HIV due to side effects and long term-use of medications⁷
- HCP's may avoid discussing sexual health with older adults due to assumptions that they are not sexually active, thereby missing out on the opportunity to discuss sexual health and sexually transmitted infection prevention education^{3 8}



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Consider factors such as stigma, ageism, HIV disclosure, and emotional & social supports when conducting assessments and treatments^{3 7}
- ✓ Watch for signs of social isolation and guide patients towards support services⁷
- ✓ Look out for cognitive problems (ex. HIV-related dementia)^{3 7}
- ✓ Discuss sexual health with all patients irrespective of age³
- ✓ Encourage self-management: aging well with HIV is possible through medication adherence, sleep, exercise, healthy diet^{7 8}

OVERALL GOAL: IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

There are various factors that can negatively impact quality of life (QOL) for PLWHIV including an increased risk for various comorbidities^{3 5}. PLWHIV still experience discrimination, fear and judgement in healthcare settings today despite stigma reduction efforts³. The inability to access safe, and adequate medical attention can lead to: delayed treatment, poor health outcomes and an overall decreased quality of life. Healthcare providers have a responsibility to provide a safe space for every patient regardless of HIV status, age, gender, sexual orientation and race. The notion that patients will not be judged for their medical history needs to be reinforced.

As a healthcare profession we need to...

- Ensure PLWHIV have access to health services beyond treatment for their primary HIV diagnosis⁹
- Using existing Health Related QOL measures to get a better understanding of patient's self-perception of QOL³
- Address and recognize challenges such as stigma, discrimination, racism, ableism within healthcare settings^{3 9}
- Ensure a comfortable and private space/environment for PLWHIV to talk about the issues they're facing⁹



For references
please go to:
www.realizecanada.org