

AGENDA 2025

Establish an HIV media program to positively engage journalists, digital content developers and influencers to tackle stigma

OBJECTIVES

To reduce HIV stigma and discrimination to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of people living with HIV and promote HIV prevention and testing.

CURRENT ISSUES

- HIV-related stigma and discrimination continue to be a part of the lives of many people with HIV across Australia.¹ That stigma is driven by a range of factors, including outdated notions of HIV and misinformation about transmission and transmissibility.
- HIV-related stigma and discrimination is a source of significant harm in the lives of individuals, causing both a decline in wellbeing and quality of life (through social isolation, shame, anxiety and depression) and in physical wellbeing (social isolation is correlated with poorer adherence to HIV treatment).
- Stigma and discrimination present a barrier to people presenting for regular testing, disclosing HIV status, and sustaining contact with health care and treatment adherence.^{2,3,4} These factors in turn pose a risk to our public health goals of reducing HIV transmission.
- Despite the substantial body of knowledge about the prevalence, nature and impact of HIV-related stigma there are significant gaps in knowledge about interventions that have been shown to improve care or increased access to care for people with HIV.⁵
- Best practice interventions for stigma reduction place people affected by stigma at the core of the response.^{6,7} Research has found that knowing a person living with HIV and putting a human face to infections can help shift stigmatising attitudes.⁸ Hence, direct and deep community involvement at each stage is essential for achieving stigma reduction.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

- Engage communication and media specialists to design a sophisticated, integrated communication plan that targets community settings, news and specialist media, social media and digital channels.
- Create a working document of key messages, supported by proof points, case studies and anecdotes. Create a target list of national, specialist and community media journalists and outlets and monitor for opportunities to intervene in the news cycle with stories, commentary and other supportive content.
- Partner with community opinion leaders, social influencers and journalists to promote positive representations of people living with HIV, challenge prejudice and challenge outdated notions about living with HIV and misinformation about transmission.
- Production of media assets (such as videos, advertisements, blog posts, website content, images, podcasts) for partners to use that involve people living with HIV sharing their stories and experiences and challenging prejudices and incorrect assumptions.

Continued overleaf

COST-BENEFIT

- This investment will contribute to the prevention of poorer health outcomes among people with HIV, thereby reducing pressure on primary care and public health, and reduce late diagnoses and the health care costs associated with late HIV diagnosis.

INVESTMENT

- \$1 million per annum

References

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6. Nyblade, L., P. Mingkwan, and M.A. Stockton, Stigma reduction: an essential ingredient to ending AIDS by 2030. *Lancet HIV*, 2021. 8(2): p. e106-e113.
7. Nyblade, L., et al., Stigma in health facilities: why it matters and how we can change it. *BMC Medicine*, 2019. 17(1): p 25.
8. Broady, T.R., Brenner, L., Cama, E., Hopwood, M. and Treloar, C., 2020. Stigmatising attitudes towards people who inject drugs, and people living with blood borne viruses or sexually transmissible infections in a representative sample of the Australian population. *Plos one*, 15(4), p.e0232218.