

HEALTH AND LEARNING

Knowledge Centre

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AT A GLANCE

REPORT ON CONSULTATIONS WITH ADULTS LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

OVERVIEW

The Health and Learning Knowledge Centre's Adult Working Group (AWG) conducted consultations to identify themes, gaps, and needs for adults living with HIV/AIDS.

Participants included adults living with HIV/AIDS and service-providers from Edmonton, Montreal and Nova Scotia.

The report highlights the barriers faced by these individuals and provides some recommendations to increase awareness among key stakeholders: policy-makers, health-care and service providers, the public in general, and target groups such as young people at risk.

The best resource for a person living with HIV/AIDS is another person living with HIV/AIDS.

- COMMUNITY MEMBER, Nova Scotia

THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED

- What health means to adults living with HIV/AIDS
- How they keep in good health
- How they learn about health and get the information they need (barriers and what is working well)
- Their experiences with what is working well in the health-care system and what is not, and who should learn what
- What needs to be done

THE PARTICIPANTS

Participants included adults living with HIV/AIDS, service providers who work with adults affected by the disease and some AIDS activists. The Adult Working Group worked closely with the Canadian AIDS Society to identify potential hosts and locations for the consultations. As a result, the AWG partnered with HIV Edmonton, Northern AIDS Connection Society in Truro Nova Scotia, and Baj Mukhopadhyay, a local consultant from Montreal.

THE METHODOLOGY

Consultations were held to gather information. In total, 39 community members and 17 service providers participated.

- Three focus groups took place in Edmonton, one in Montreal and two in Truro, both of which covered all of Nova Scotia.
- Each consultation was two-to-three hours long. At the beginning of the consultation, ethics and informed consent procedures were conducted with participants.
- Participants also completed an anonymous participant profile sheet which provided information on gender, age range, employment status and level of education.

People need to look at HIV as a health issue. If AIDS had been discovered in a seniors' home, would the same kind of stigma exist?

*- COMMUNITY MEMBER,
Edmonton, Alberta*

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KEY FINDINGS:

The main barriers to good health

- Poverty and inadequate housing
- Stigma, including discrimination and stereotyping
- Side effects from medication along with diseases related to HIV/AIDS

The most common barriers to accessing information about HIV/AIDS

- Stigma and prejudice
- Low-literacy levels and language issues
- Communication with health-care providers

Key barriers to accessing health-care services

- Prejudice and discrimination
- Lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS on the part of health-care professionals, and
- Limited health-care services for people who are HIV positive, especially in rural areas

Overall, people living with HIV/AIDS say they are getting excellent service from AIDS Service Organizations, HIV specialists and some doctors.

Key Recommendations

1. Conduct public awareness campaigns in order to educate the public and key stakeholders about HIV/AIDS, targeting specific audiences such as young people at risk, schools, churches, and hospitals.
2. Offer sensitivity training for health-care professionals, students in medical schools, police officers, and members of churches.
3. Make public agencies such as community services more accessible and more responsive to issues of poverty and housing.
4. Make changes to insurance company assessments for people who are HIV positive so they are able to work during energetic periods.
5. Increase health-care services for people with HIV/AIDS.
6. Increase innovative opportunities to enhance the health-care field's expertise on HIV/AIDS.

The AWG focusses on four priority groups: adults with low-literacy levels, immigrants and refugees, adults living with HIV/AIDS, and adults living in rural and remote communities.

WHAT NEXT?

Supporting research by funding

- Community-based participatory research on interventions that could improve access of adults living with HIV/AIDS to health-care services and health information
- Research into the discrimination that adults living with HIV/AIDS report they experience within Canada's health-care system with the intent of developing strategies to address these barriers.
- Ongoing evaluations of policy interventions that address poverty, housing, literacy, and other social determinants of health related to people living with HIV/AIDS

THE RESEARCH TEAM

These consultations were conducted by the following members of the Health and Learning Knowledge Centre's Adult Working Group and their partners:

- ∴ Sue Folinsbee
- ∴ Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier
- ∴ Allan Quigley
- ∴ H el ene Gr egoire

The Health and Learning Knowledge Centre is composed of a 17-member consortium led by the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. The centre brings together a wide variety of professional health and learning individuals and organizations based in British Columbia, Yukon and across Canada.

Health and Learning Knowledge Centre
c/o School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education
University of Victoria, PO Box 3015 Stn CSC
Victoria, BC V8W 3P1
Tel.: 250.721.7833 | Fax: 250.721.6601