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Community-Based Research & Advisory Team

Abdul Abdulmalik (AB)
Andrea Carter (AB)
Añiela dela Cruz (AB)
Barhet Woldemariam (AB)
Jean Harrowing (AB)
Muru Khamisi (AB)
Pam Amulaku (AB)
Patience Magagula (BC)
San Patten (NS)
Sipiwe Mapfumo (AB)
Sithokozile Maposa (SK)
Vera Caine (AB)

Greetings

As a team we are pleased to provide you an update on our work in the area of HIV stigma, migration and settlement, and the health of newcomers in Canada. In September 2017, we re-named ourselves after our face to face meeting in Calgary to the ‘Newcomers, HIV, Immigration, Treatment, Engagement and Stigma’ Canada team, or simply the NewHITES Canada team. Since 2001, many of us have worked directly together to understand HIV in immigrant communities in Alberta. We are a community-based research team based in communities across Canada, and out of the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, and we are from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, all working together to better understand the experiences of immigrants living with HIV in Canada. We are people representing AIDS Service Organizations, advocacy groups, immigrant settlement services, and people living with or affected by HIV. We also work to find ways reduce health and social inequities experienced by immigrants living with HIV in Canada; and we work with the community to identify research priorities. We are a diverse group of people and each member brings their strengths and expertise to our collective work, and continue to find ways to improve the lives of newcomers living with HIV in Canada.

Results: National Study

Building on findings from the pilot study called *“An Exploratory Study Assessing and Understanding HIV-Related Stigma Among African Immigrants Living With HIV in Alberta, Who Have Had HIV-Testing During the Immigration Medical Examination (IME) Process”*, we completed data collection of our national study in 2018, *“African and Caribbean Immigrants Living with HIV in Canada – Internalized and Experienced stigma during the process of Migration and Settlement”*. Here is an update on our national study:

- ❖ We reached 123 people across Canada who completed a survey assessing internalized HIV stigma.

Main Project Contacts:

Añiela dela Cruz
(403) 210-7484
aniela.delacruz@ucalgary.ca

Vera Caine
(780) 248-1974
vera.caine@ualberta.ca

San Patten
(902) 292-3260
san.patten@gmail.com

Main Study Line - Call:
+1 (403) 210-7484

- ❖ Of the 123 people we reached, 34 people met with a researcher to share their experiences of mandatory HIV testing through the Canadian Immigration Medical Examination (IME).
- ❖ We ended data collection in February 2018. We are currently in the data analysis phase of our study.

Findings include:

- ❖ High internalized stigma among respondents, particularly in the domains of disclosure and self-acceptance.
- ❖ People with 9 to 10 years of education have higher disclosure concerns, compared to people with 14+ years of education.
- ❖ We found inconsistencies in the way people experienced mandatory HIV screening during the immigration medical exam, in the areas of: informed consent, pre-HIV test counselling, post-HIV test counselling, and referral to health care services or follow up care in the context of migration and settlement in Canada.
- ❖ Potential for people to have disruption in the HIV care cascade during migration to and settlement in Canada.

Data analysis is nearly complete. We hope to share results with community partners and stakeholders through online webinars and face to face forums in the coming months. We aim to share findings and to carry on the conversation about what we can do with the study findings to influence change in positive ways.

We thank the many organizations across Canada who supported this project in many wonderful ways. It was wonderful to work with many partners across Canada who acted as bridges between our team and the wider community. In order to further protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, we cannot name organizations individually. However, we thank all organizations across Canada who worked with us over the last few years.

We also thank all the people who contributed to this study and for their courage to share their experiences related to living with HIV, and migrating and settling in Canada. **Thank you!**

Upcoming CBR Work

We are submitting an application for funding in October 2019, to study and understand the context of mandatory HIV Screening during the Canadian Immigration Medical Exam (IME), specifically the IME panel physician context of HIV testing. Stay tuned!