



Exploring the use of community-based art to reduce HIV stigma in Australia

Supervisors

A/Professor Sally Nathan (School of Population Health, UNSW)

Dr Allison Carter, Senior Lecturer - Sexual Health Program (Kirby Institute, UNSW)

Background and rationale

Globally, women make up more than half of the 38 million people living with HIV. In Australia, however, women are an invisible minority. In 2018, it was estimated that there were 3,370 women living with HIV across the country, or 10% of people who are living with HIV in Australia. Because of their relatively small numbers, women exist on the margins of our HIV response and still face damaging stigma and discrimination, as well as significant barriers to having their health and social care needs met.

Positively Women is a community-based arts research study, led by The Kirby Institute, that is exploring what it means to be a woman living with HIV in Australia. The team is also examining how art can effect change. To do this, the project has two stages. In the first stage of the study, works of art were created by 10 women living with HIV through a virtual workshop lasting 4 weeks in November 2020. This involved a range of activities such as drawing, painting, meditation, gentle movement, and storytelling. In the second stage, the team is planning to exhibit the women's art for mainstream society and assessing its impacts on knowledge and attitudes toward women and HIV (<https://positivelywomenproject.com.au/>).

Project aims

To conduct a mixed methods evaluation of the *Positively Women* art exhibition and to assess the transformative potential of arts-based approaches for reducing stigma for people living with HIV, particularly women living with HIV.

Research design and methodology

The student will assist with data collection, analysis, and reviewing and summarising key findings. The project includes a range of methods to offer a multi-layered understanding of the proposed exhibition's impact on viewing audiences, including: 1) feedback collected during virtual guided tours and discussions of the exhibition with target audiences (e.g., people living with HIV, health professionals, the general public), 2) a short self-completion evaluation survey on the exhibition website, and 3) Google Analytics to track community reach and engagement over time. The student will be expected to support these research activities, to meet weekly with the supervisors, and to write a draft paper suitable for publication in a health journal.

Timeline and proposed workload

12UOC. Flexible workload/hours per week based on unit requirements. Commence in Term 3, 2021. Ethics approval is already in place. Data collection and analysis will occur in Term 3 2021 and final write up in Summer Term or Term 1, 2022 (to be negotiated).

Description of student skills

Completed PHCM9012 Health Promotion & Social Perspectives of Health, PHCM9120 Qualitative Research Methods, and/or PHCM9498 Epidemiology and Statistics for Public Health, an interest/passion in supporting research and education, interest in further developing skills in thematic analysis and descriptive statistics, and excellent writing skills.

