

Caring for Older People Living with HIV/AIDS in Long-Term Care and Assisted Living in British Columbia, Canada's Fraser Health Region

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In Canada, the demographic landscape of HIV/AIDS is shifting, with 1 in 5 new infections occurring in people 50+. This trend requires us to understand how to support older people living with HIV/AIDS (OPLWH) as they enter long-term care and assisted living (LTC/AL) in growing numbers. Despite recognition of their social and medical care needs, little consideration has been given to how LTC/AL environments can become more welcoming for and inclusive of OPLWH. Our exploratory qualitative study addresses this gap by employing a community-based approach in collaboration with the Fraser Health Authority in British Columbia, Canada. Through interviews with stakeholders—physicians, administrators, care providers, residents & family caregivers, OPLWH, and community organization leaders—we are exploring opportunities and barriers surrounding HIV-positivity and aging in LTC/AL. Preliminary findings show that stigma is a significant obstacle for care staff in providing person-centred care, which is a desired approach that values residents' unique preferences and needs when making care decisions. Care staff emphasize the need for training on stigma and basic HIV education to effectively support OPLWH. Further, discussions regarding residents' HIV-status as a key part of identity are often overlooked in person-centred approaches. Our research underscores the urgency of addressing stigma and enhancing education within LTC/AL to better meet the needs of OPLWH as this resident community grows. By engaging with stakeholders and centering those directly involved in care, our partnered approach ultimately seeks to inform the development of inclusive care strategies that promote the wellbeing of OPLWH in LTC/AL in the Fraser Health Authority and beyond.

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