

CREATING A DIGITAL HARM REDUCTION TOOL FOR LGBTI PEOPLE EXPERIENCING CO-OCCURRING ISSUES WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

J Wiggins¹, S Ruth^{1,7}, K Burgess¹, R Keane², M Stoovè^{3,4}, S Slavin⁵, I Combden⁶,

¹Victorian AIDS Council, Services, South Yarra, Australia; ²Living Positive Victoria, Board of Directors, Melbourne, Australia; ³Burnet Institute, Centre for Population Health, Melbourne, Australia; ⁴Monash University, School of Population Health and Preventive Medicine, Melbourne, Australia; ⁵Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, Health Promotion, Sydney, Australia; ⁶Australian Drug Foundation, Melbourne, Australia; ⁷Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, Board, Sydney, Australia

Introduction / Issues: Substance use in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities contributes to poorer mental health outcomes. In Australia, LGBTI people experience rates of illicit drug use far greater than the general population, particularly men who have sex with other men (MSM) who have a prevalence of methamphetamine use of up to 35%.

Despite these figures, there is a lack of culturally appropriate harm reduction resources targeting LGBTI people.

TouchBase, the first of its type, is a digital tool that provides harm reduction, recovery information, service referral and peer education for people who use drugs integrated with mental health information and drug interactions for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and transgender people who take hormones.

This resource provides accurate, non judgemental information to users, family and peers of the most common drugs used by LGBTI Australians. Each substance included addresses issues and risks specifically for PLHIV and transgender people, including maintaining treatment adherence, minimising drug interactions and reducing drug-related mental health and sexual risk.

Discussions and Conclusions: Critical to the success of this digital intervention has been engagement of LGBTI people and the peer voice in both the pre-implementation formative work and the post implementation evaluation to develop and maintain relevance. These experiences show: The language and visuals of online resources need to be accessible, accurate and tailored to the subculture; Information needs to be provided in engaging ways that are non judgmental and avoids authoritarian language; High appeal and usability among LGBTI people; Privileging the peer voice can engage hard to reach communities experiencing co-occurring issues with mental health and alcohol and other drugs; Harm reduction information specific to MSM PLHIV can be successfully integrated within a broader harm reduction resource for LGBTI and within a platform that also addresses stigma and marginalisation of MSM PLHIV.

The development and evaluation of TouchBase provides a model for an accessible, culturally relevant, non stigmatising digital intervention to reduce harms associated with mental health and drug use for LGBTI people.

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