

# PARENTING DESIRES, EXPECTATIONS AND SPERM DONATION AMONG HIV POSITIVE GAY MEN

Jen Johnson <sup>1</sup> Jennifer Power <sup>1</sup> Graham Brown <sup>1</sup> Anthony Lyons <sup>1</sup>

Gary W. Dowsett <sup>1</sup> Jayne Lucke <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society

## Background

Improvements in antiretroviral treatment, availability of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and technologies such as sperm washing have increased options for people living with HIV to conceive children. In addition, legislative and social change has allowed more gay men to become fathers through private sperm donation arrangements, surrogacy, or other means such as fostering or adoption. However, there is very limited knowledge on whether gay men who are living with HIV desire parenthood, or have plans to become parents.

## Method

This poster draws on two separate data sources. Quantitative data were collected in 2015/2016 via a national cross-sectional survey of people living with HIV, HIV Futures 8. There were 697 respondents to this survey who identified as gay men (77.8% of the total sample of 895). Descriptive data analysis was undertaken.

Qualitative data were collected in 2013 via interviews and focus groups with 28 Victorian clinical and community-based key informants who work with lesbian and gay prospective parents and donors. Data were analysed via inductive, thematic coding.

## Results

Survey data indicated 12% (n=86) of gay men living with HIV desired parenthood in the future. Substantially fewer (3%, n=21) expected to have children, while 9% (n=67) were unsure if they would have children.

Overall, 9.5% (n=66) of gay men who participated in the study had children. The majority of these (n=63) were parents prior to their HIV diagnosis. However, three had become parents since their HIV diagnosis, two through fostering and one as a step-parent. No gay men in this sample had become a parent via sperm donation after their HIV diagnosis. There were 101 gay men (14.5%) who indicated that they would have liked to have children but did not due to fear of passing on HIV.



HIV positive prospective donors are currently subject to policy-based exclusion from all Victorian clinical fertility services. Interview participants reported they had observed increasing interest in parenting among young HIV positive gay men.

Several doctors reported male patients had presented with questions about sperm donation and undetectable viral load, usually in the context of home-based insemination with lesbian friends. Many doctors were unsure about whether they were contravening legislation to give advice on this matter.

## Conclusion

There is likely to be increasing interest in parenthood among HIV positive gay men as technological and social change, including increased access to PrEP, facilitates options to achieve this. In Victoria, there is no law that specifically prohibits HIV positive men from donating sperm. Private sperm donation arrangements between HIV positive men and HIV negative women, provided that HIV status has been disclosed and informed consent can be demonstrated, are lawful in Victoria. Clear and accessible legal and health information relating to HIV+ sperm donation needs to be made available in all jurisdictions.