

## HIV/AIDS and Us Mob

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HIV/AIDS and Us Mob, a new information resource for indigenous people, was launched late last month in Alice Springs by the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations ([AFAO](#) [1]Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations. AFAO is the peak non-government organisation representing Australia's community-based response to HIV/AIDS. AFAO's work includes education, policy, advocacy and international projects. ), reports MICHAEL COSTELLO.

Since the advent of HAART for HIV-positive people in 1996, little has been done to ensure that indigenous Australians are as informed about new treatments as their non-indigenous counterparts. AFAO, with the release of HIV/AIDS and Us Mob, has set out to change that.

This new booklet has been developed to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS, testing, care and support issues and is the first resource specifically designed to provide information about treatment options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the HAART era.

The booklet targets indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS and provides [baseline](#) [2]1. Information gathered at the beginning of a study from which variations found in the study are measured. 2. A known value or quantity with which an unknown is compared when measured or assessed. 3. The initial time point in a clinical trial, just before a participant starts to receive the experimental treatment which is being tested. At this reference point, measurable values such as CD4 count are recorded. Safety and efficacy of a drug are often determined by monitoring changes from the baseline values. treatments information including: how the immune system works to recognise and fight infections, the stages of HIV infection, [viral load](#) [3]A measurement of the quantity of HIV RNA in the blood. Viral load blood test results are expressed as the number of copies (of HIV) per milliliter of blood plasma., [antiviral](#) [4]A medication or substance which is active against one or more viruses. May include anti-HIV drugs, but these are more accurately termed antiretrovirals. treatments, [combination therapy](#) [5]Highly Active AntiRetroviral Therapy ??? aggressive treatment of HIV infection using several different drugs together., associated side-effects and structured treatment interruptions.

The resource has also been designed to make the broader indigenous community more aware of some of the complex issues that indigenous [PLWHA](#) [6]Person (or People) Living with HIV/AIDS. may confront. Indigenous PLWHA are still dealing with HIV/AIDS discrimination and stigmatisation, so broader community education depends on the whole community understanding what indigenous PLWHAs' needs are.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PLWHA were central to the development process, defining the content and cultural appropriateness of information. The resource content needed to consider a multitude of aspects such as language, literacy skills and cultural sensitivities. AFAO recognised early in the process that reproducing existing non-indigenous resources and placing some indigenous art on the cover would not be of any benefit to the target audience, and the best way to achieve a successful outcome would be to ensure positive indigenous involvement and control of the resource.

The highly technical information often associated with HIV/AIDS needed to be broken down into a style that is appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities but also take into account the language diversity of remote and urban communities.

An example of this is specific words such as treatments being replaced with medicines and indigenous cartoon-like imagery has been used in the design to illustrate parts of the text. The layout provides a storytelling framework to place medical concepts in a real-world context, making it accessible and working towards improving health literacy in indigenous communities.

One of the more difficult areas of development was the consideration of cultural sensitivities to include information for both men and women. Cultural protocols define the way in which men's and women's business may be discussed within indigenous communities, meaning that only men or women can discuss their own business. This has long been an issue for indigenous HIV/AIDS education and prevention, and whilst this resource does not provide cultural solutions it does acknowledge these protocols.

With an abundance of HIV/AIDS and treatment information available to non-indigenous communities, HIV/AIDS and Us Mob was developed with the realisation that a single resource cannot answer all the complex issues associated with HIV/AIDS and treatments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, but can provide a starting point.

HIV/AIDS and Us Mob will be distributed nationally and will shortly be available through AIDS Councils and Aboriginal Medical Services.

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#)

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/385>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/472>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/416>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/123>

[5] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/96>

[6] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/119>