



Questionnaire V.10 Officially Launched

Each year, the OCS updates its questionnaire to reflect emerging scientific evidence and respond to the community's needs. Effective January 9th, Questionnaire V.10 had been approved by each site's ethics board and implemented at all sites! For the list of this year's changes to the questionnaire, see [Oct2022 Newsletter](#). For an updated list of all topics included in the current questionnaire, visit [here](#).

OCS Studies Explore Issues Facing People Living with HIV

Two complementary research proposals, led by Notisha Massaquoi and Anita Benoit, have been approved to use OCS data:

- "Investigating Health-Related Quality of Life in African, Caribbean, and Black people living with HIV/AIDS in Ontario." Approved by the Governance Committee, November 2022.
- "Investigating Health-Related Quality of Life in Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS in Ontario." Approved by the Indigenous Data Governance Circle, December 2022.

The researchers will analyze OCS data on health-related quality of life to help improve health outcomes for two populations disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in Ontario.

Indigenous Participants' Experiences of Discrimination

In 2020, the OCS launched an adapted version of the Major Experiences of Discrimination Scale. Dr. Sean Hillier (York University) is leading an analysis of these data to understand Indigenous participants' experiences of discrimination. Sean presented preliminary results of the analysis to the OCS Indigenous Data Governance Circle at their November meeting. Circle members acknowledged the significance of the study and the early results, and approved the development of an abstract for CAHR 2023 conference and a manuscript for publication.

Cancer screening among men living with HIV

Jennifer L Gillis and colleagues published an article using OCS data in the peer-reviewed journal *BMC Public Health*. Their research assesses the beliefs of men living with HIV regarding anal cancer screening and identifies factors associated with their willingness to participate in screening. Findings show that:

- Among 1677 male participants, 90% would be willing to undergo screening by "anal Pap test".
- Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men are more willing (aOR = 1.62; 95% CI: 1.15, 2.29) than heterosexual men to undergo screening.

OCS Quick Facts

Since mid-2020, the OCS has collected data on COVID-19 vaccinations among OCS participants.

The 2022 data demonstrates that uptake of COVID-19 vaccine among OCS participants is high, and likely higher than people living with diagnosed HIV overall in Ontario.

Among 2,208 people who were interviewed last year:

2,057 (93.1%) reported that they are fully vaccinated (i.e., received at least 2 doses) compared to 83.2% having a record of vaccination among adults living with HIV according to ICES data from 2021¹

1,668 people (75.5%) have received three or more doses - compared to 36.0% having a record of vaccination among adults living with HIV according to ICES data from 2021¹

On the other hand, uptake of Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines is relatively low:

1,524 people (69%) have received Influenza vaccine in the past year.

1,200 (54.4%) have received pneumococcal vaccines in their lifetime.

¹As per Freitas, Burchell et al analysis (abstract accepted to Canadian Immunization Conference 2023).

- Higher self-perceived risk for anal cancer and positive beliefs regarding screening were associated with higher willingness to be screened.
- Overall, men generally had positive beliefs and were willing to undergo screening regardless of differences by sexual orientation and racial identity.

Investigators suggest that tailored community-led initiatives focusing on men's understanding of risk and expectations of anal cancer screening may encourage higher rates of participation in screening. Read the full publication [here](#).

COVID Seroprevalence in People Living with HIV

The OCS worked with Ann Burchell (Unity Health), who is leading a study on COVID seroprevalence in people living with HIV, to recruit people to be part of the study. OCS participants responded enthusiastically: more than 70% expressed interest in being part of the study. As of December 2, 2022, recruitment is now complete. Of a total of 906 people referred from the OCS and 707 have been consented into the study with a total recruitment rate of 78%.

This is the first OCS sub-study requiring a biological sample. Participants provided dry blood spots samples that are being examined by a lab in Ottawa. Results of these seroprevalence assays will be linked back to OCS data, which will allow the OCS to look at how COVID affects the health of people living with HIV.

We thank site PIs and data collectors at Hamilton, LSJ, MLMC, OGH, SBH, SMH, TGH, and WRH for supporting recruitment for this study.

Changes to OCS Governance and the Study Team

Tony DiPede, who has supported the OCS for many years, has completed his term as a member of the governance committee. We are very grateful for Tony's longstanding commitment to the OCS.

The Governance Committee is pleased to announce that the OHTN Board has approved the nomination of Adrian Betts to join the committee. Adrian, who is the executive director of the AIDS Committee of Durham Region and has worked with many HIV/AIDS service organizations and other social justice services over the years, has served on the OCS Governance committee in the past. Welcome back, Adrian! For the full list of committee members, visit [here](#).

Our data collectors are the heart of the OCS team, and we are very grateful to all of them for their dedication and commitment to the work. OCS is pleased to welcome three new data collectors to the team: Candida Sinoway at Elevate NWO, Tania Correa at the Blue Door Clinic, and Arny Naweza at the Byward Family Health Team. We also bid farewell to Amy Ly (UHN), Queenie Huang (UHN), Bertrand Niragire (BFHT) and Melanie Boudreau (SRH) who have left their roles as data collectors, and we wish them success in their future endeavours.

The **Ontario HIV Treatment Network Cohort Study (OCS)** is an ongoing research study that collects clinical, social and behavioural information about people living with HIV (PHA) in Ontario. Participation in the study is voluntary, and all personally identifying information of study participants is removed to ensure confidentiality. The OCS was established to improve our understanding of HIV and inform HIV prevention, care and treatment strategies for people living with HIV and groups at risk of HIV infection. For more information about the OCS, please visit www.ohtn.cohortstudy.ca or email ocs@ohtn.on.ca.