

Program ID#: EPHP4.01 / Abstract 5360

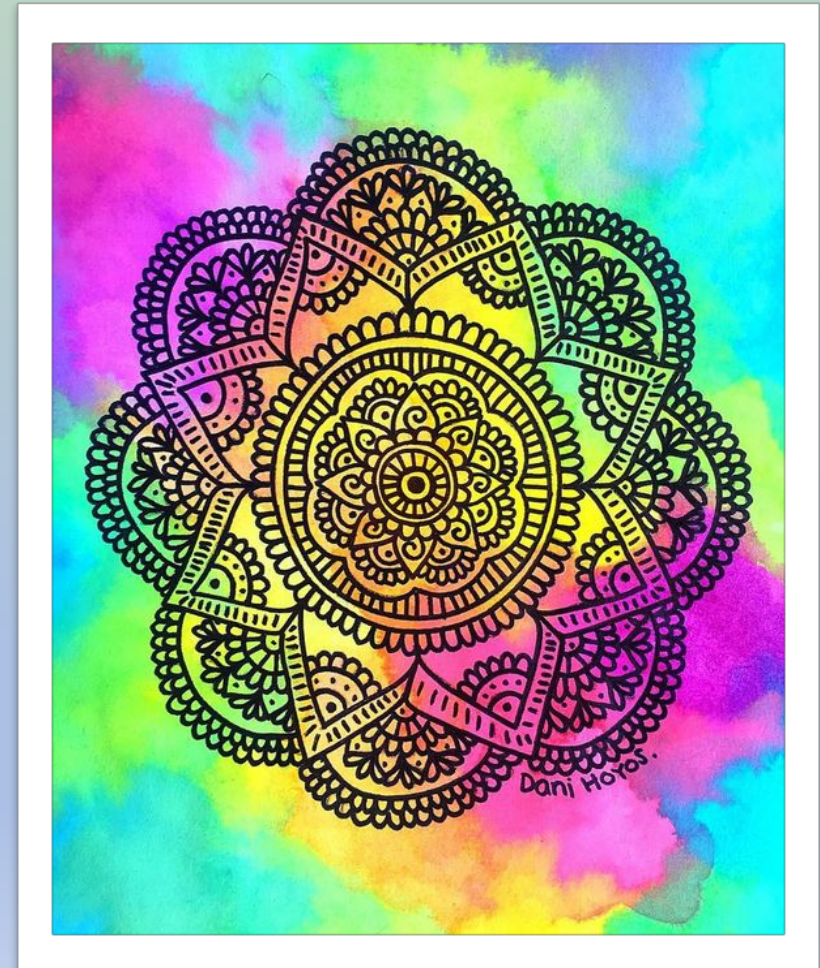
Track: Epidemiology and Public Health Sciences

MANDALAS - Colouring Connections: An Art Therapy & Mental Health group for HIV +/- individuals in Toronto

Social Disconnection as a common tale in the HIV Prevention Program, CSSP

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Background

Social disconnection is a recurrent and common trait among immigrants in Canada, particularly those who are gender diverse, gender non-conforming and non-heterosexual oriented, body-conforming, HIV+, HIV at risk, and any individual who is intersected by multiple layers of oppression. Social isolation is suffered by a person who struggles to find grounds of empathy with other individuals given their multiple, and deeper layers of marginalization that they have encountered in their life-journey. A drawing Mandala Art drop-in group was created by CSSP's Mental Health Counsellor and was facilitated by her and a Community Peer Leader. This group intervention for CSSP's community individuals (n=15 started in the first session) was held on a bi-weekly basis, and proper evaluation tools were employed.

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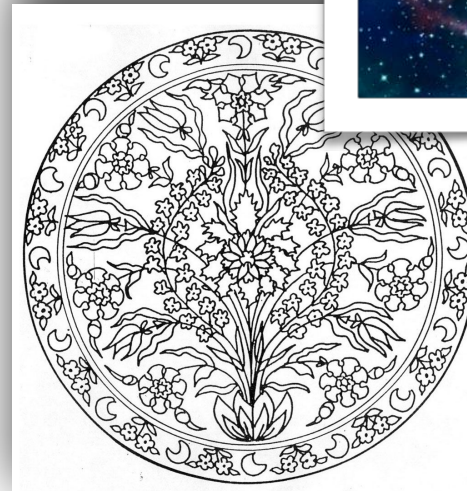
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Methods

Community-based evaluation tools were employed for recruiting a closed group, for a total of 8 sessions from March to June 2019. The procedure included an individual interview, and pre tests/post tests were conducted to participants using the following scales (n=7 completed the process): Social demographic questionnaire; GAD-7 (General Anxiety Disorder-7) scale; Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) for Depressive Disorders; and a Social Support Questionnaire adapted from *Chicos Net* (a former CSSP's intervention).



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Results

Preliminary results showed an important increasing social integration, on the way of reducing social disconnection. The Mandala Group linked community individuals who usually would have not been connected. Although HIV disclosure was not a pre-requisite, some individuals felt safe enough to disclose their serostatus. At CSSP, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity status, and other often marginalizing factors are commonplace. All participants signed a confidentiality agreement.

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Conclusion

Preliminary data analysis shows promising results, along with positive narratives of integration. HIV/sexual health knowledge increased, while reducing stigma. Finally, social disconnection emerged as a key social determinant among immigrants, and non-conforming (body, sexual orientation, gender, HIV status, legal status, etc.) individuals. Next steps will include further support for facilitating gathering evidence of the program's efficacy and effectiveness.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure: I have no conflicts of interest.

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