

# Vulnerability and Resilience: The Lived Experience of Women who Receive an HIV Diagnosis During the Resettlement Process

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This research was funded by the University of New Brunswick: University Research Fund

# Background and Objectives

- **Background**

Many women are displaced or forced into exile during times of war and conflict. Women who receive an HIV diagnosis during this resettlement process may experience loss of connection with others, stigma, social isolation, and shame. As these women attempt to negotiate the health care system and seek treatment, they often face increased trauma.

- **Objectives**

To describe and explore with HIV-positive women refugees and asylum seekers the meaning and lived experience of receiving an HIV-positive diagnosis or obtaining care for HIV during the resettlement process.

# Methodology, Data Collection, and Emerging Findings

## **Methodology**

Qualitative research using interpretative phenomenology (van Manen, 1997)

## **Data Collection**

2018: Ethical approval received, and data collected in greater Toronto area

Six semi-structured interviews

All participants had settled in Toronto within one year of interview date

Participants recruited through community-based HIV/AIDS organizations

- **Emerging Findings focused on issues relate to:**

- Spatiality
- Corporality
- Temporality
- Communality

## Major Themes

### **Vulnerability**

“Being a refugee in a new environment is hard. You know you are HIV [positive]. You end up isolating yourself from people because you don’t know what can happen. You sideline yourself from day-to-day life. You are hopeless you don’t know what you can do. You don’t know how life will be (Participant A).”

“I was like ‘now where do I start’ whom to call, whether to cry.’ A thought came to my head and I thought ‘okay, let me call my lawyer (Participant B).”

### **Resilience**

“I believe I’ve been resilient. When I came, I didn’t even want to be seen at an AIDS Service Organization. I don’t have that fear anymore. I’m stronger than when I came (Participant C).”

“When I came here, I was very strategic in terms of navigating the HIV system (Participant D).”

# Conclusion and Reference

- Resilience and vulnerability intertwine and overlap as refugees and asylum seekers resettle.
- Additional qualitative research is needed in the areas of applied health research and policy implications.

## Reference

- Van Manen, M. (1997). Researching lived experience (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

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