



Community Research Associates - Title Change

BCC3 Research Team - 01 Dec 2022

As of December 1st, 2022, the British Columbia CARMA-CHIWOS Collaboration (BCC3) Research Team is transitioning to using the term Community Research Associate (CRA) to describe women living with HIV who are hired and trained to work with BCC3, formerly known as Peer Research Associates (PRA).

Previously, the term Peer Research Associate was used to identify people living with HIV (peers) who are hired, trained, and supported to work in research ¹. Including community members as key team members and honouring lived and living experience in research is vital to specifying aims, diversifying participant outreach and recruitment efforts to reach those who are typically underserved by research. This improves data collection and analysis, informing the interpretation and implications of research findings, and contributes to knowledge translation. The national CHIWOS study was one of the first community-based research study to widely use the terminology of 'PRA' ² and we honour the careful intentional thought that went into choosing this language.

Since initiating the BCC3 study, the BCC3 team has hired, trained, and supported four PRAs as integral members of the research team. Over that time, and after reflecting on the terminology of PRA, our team has determined that the term "Peer" does not fulsomely capture the role and expertise that community members bring to the research team. Thus, we have reached a consensus that **Community Research Associate (CRA) is our preferred term**. The primary reasons for adopting this new language relate to the following:

- 1) Community members represent community perspectives, in addition to peer perspectives. In addition to having living experience of HIV, CRAs bring numerous other community perspectives to the study, including lived and living experience of immigration, racialized identity, Indigenous identity, substance use, sex work, mental health and wellness, and other often intersecting identities that are shared with the broader community of women living with HIV.
- 2) Community members are foundational liaisons who bring community priorities and perspectives to the study and assist with translating study findings to the community. The term CRA better represents their overall role as community representatives.
- 3) Using the word "peer" is considered more identifying as a woman living with HIV. However, not all women living with HIV who are employed as part of the BCC3 team are publicly disclosed with their HIV status, and this is not a condition of employment. The language of CRA does not inadvertently disclose their status.

We recognize that language is important to be reflective of community priorities and that language evolves over time³. Accordingly, as of World AIDS Day 2022, the BCC3 team will use the language of CRA - “Community Research Associate” going forward. We encourage other teams to reflect on their own language and to share with us and other research teams as their language evolves and adapts over time.

References

1. Kaida A, Carter A, Nicholson V, et al. Hiring, training and supporting peer research associates: operationalizing community-based research principles within epidemiological studies by, with, and for women living with HIV *Harm Reduction Journal*. 2019;16(1):47.
2. Loutfy M, Greene S, Kennedy VL, et al. Establishing the Canadian HIV Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Cohort Study (CHIWOS): Operationalizing Community-based Research in a Large National Quantitative Study. *BMC Med Res Methodol*. 2016;16(1):101.
3. Kaida A, Cameron B, Conway T, et al. Key recommendations for developing a national action plan to advance the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV in Canada. *Womens Health (Lond)*. 2022;18:17455057221090829.