

'Critical Performance,' an Arts-Based Method for Exploring HIV-Related Stigma, Social Support, and Access to Care among People Living with HIV/AIDS in Rural China

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Abstract : Background and Significance: Performance has a rich history of imparting information and encouraging reflection, yet there is a paucity of literature on applying performance as a method of analysis and not as a medium for health education. This study aimed to apply ethnodrama strategies to the issue of HIV-related stigma in rural China and to use a critical performance as a vehicle for communication of health research. Methods: The program, titled 'STOP STIGMA,' included dance, narratives and original quotes from people living with HIV/AIDS in China, and spectacle such as photographs, set, and props corresponding to the history of HIV in rural China. Results: The performance represented a step away from a completely textual interpretation of data towards a theatrical style that begins to privilege what arts-based research scholars Rossiter and colleagues have termed 'an embodied, theatrical representation of data.' It offered an opportunity to deliver individual and collective stories that represent how HIV-positive people experience living with HIV/AIDS in China, which could play an integral part in the formulation of actions to effect change. Discussion: This method of communicating health research has implications for fostering dialogue among researchers, community members, and medical practitioners. Although arts-based approaches are not new to the scientific community, the integration of dance, video, ethnodrama, and sciences provides opportunities to innovate in non-traditional research dissemination and communication.

Keywords : health communication, HIV/AIDS, stigma, vulnerable populations

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