

## **Breakout Session: Promoting rural HIV education for diverse learners**

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### **How can we improve rural medical education to inform HIV care?**

Within Canada, organizations such as [CATIE](#) help support medical education and knowledge sharing by producing understandable and appropriate educational material for professionals and communities. However, in the context of rural communities, unique barriers to sharing and accessing educational materials exist. In these settings, limitations include: geographical barriers (e.g. location/distance of testing and care services; transportation to and from these sites), confusion around how information should be delivered (e.g. uncertainty surrounding politically correct/appropriate terms involving sexuality, gender and ethnicity; cultural sensitivity), and reluctance among care-providers to talk about HIV with their patients.

#### **Potential strategies to overcoming barriers in rural communities may include:**

1. **Community champion:** electing a champion—a trusted public figure—in each community who is responsible for sharing information within their respective communities
2. **Media/social media/voice:** harnessing the collective power of the media, social media, and voices and stories of survivors as a way to build greater awareness and understanding of HIV in rural communities, and to work to reduce HIV-related stigma
3. **Medical school curriculum changes:** enacting changes that promote open-mindedness with respect to sexuality and lifestyle factors, such as substance use, can be used to curb stigma, promote inclusivity, and help breakdown communication barriers in the patient-provider relationship