

Resilience of Peer Navigation Among HIV Positive Older People (50+) in Multi-Crisis During the War in Ukraine

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BACKGROUND

- We explored how older people with HIV (OPWH, defined as ≥50 years) may learn and practice Peer Navigation in Ukraine during a multi-crisis.
- The war context includes progressively diminishing means of subsistence, destruction of critical public infrastructure and individuals' homes through military bombings, and forced loneliness when loved ones must flee.
- We evaluated how Supervision may support Peer Navigators (PNs) in this context from 2023 to 2024.

Multi-crisis in Ukraine - lack or absence of means of subsistence, logistical difficulties, often forced loneliness due to the migration of loved ones, destruction and loss of homes due to military bombings.

Supervisor is a psychologist who responsible for ensuring the quality of consulting, further training of navigators and operational monitoring of navigator`s activities.

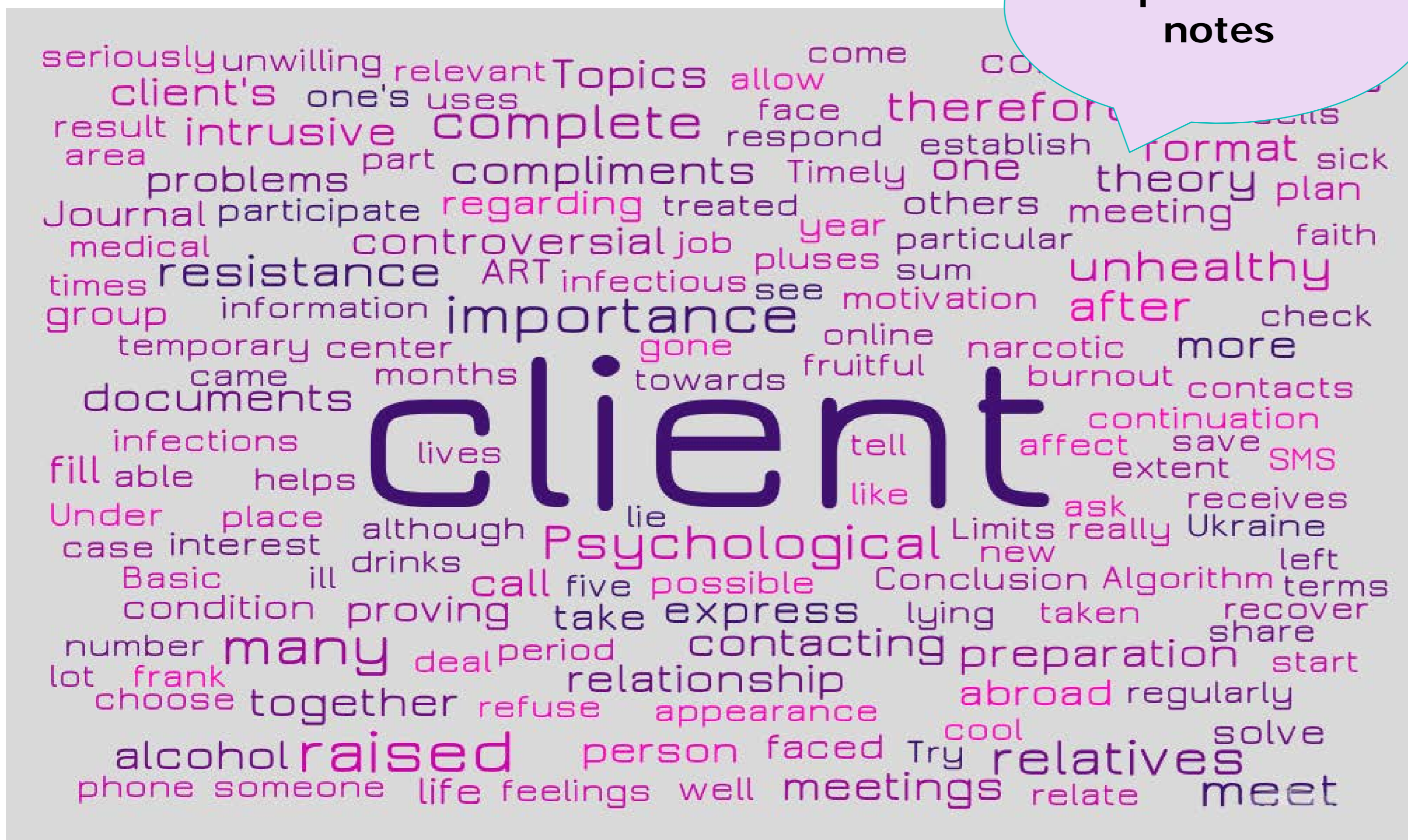
Peer Navigator - is an older person with HIV who helps develop an individual plan for caring for the client's health.

METHODS

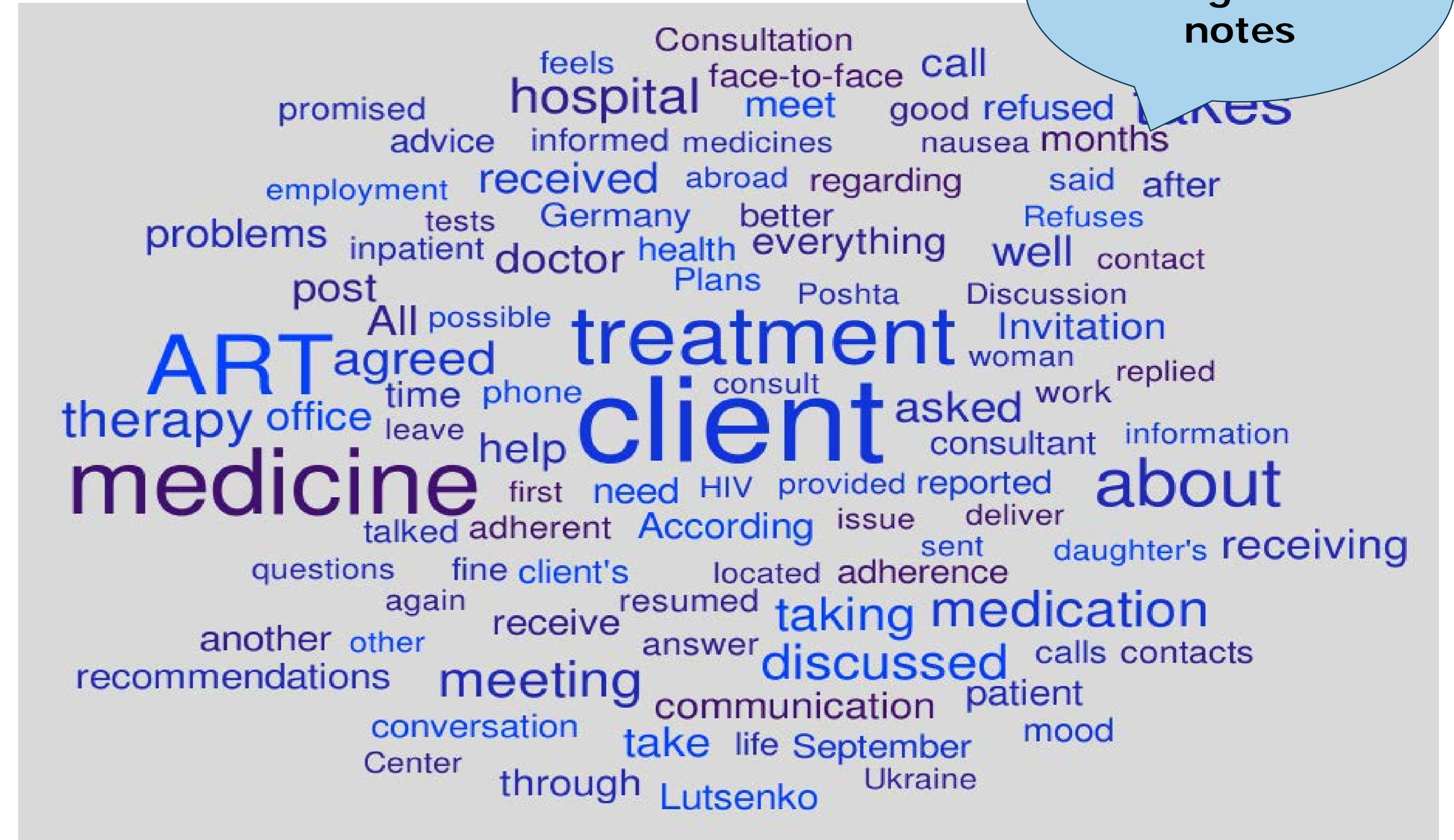
For OPWH, we developed a peer navigation program consisting of a team of 6 PNs (4 women and 2 men) running June-December 2023 in Kyiv city.

- **PN eligibility criteria** included being a OPWH with **virologic suppression for at least 12 months**, and, crucially, **wishing to help other OPWH**.
- **Clients' eligibility criteria** were **out-of-care OPWH**, including both **recently diagnosed and long-term 'lost to follow up'** (not receiving treatment for 30 days or more).
- PNs were trained including Motivational Interviewing techniques, by a supervising practicing psychologist. An HIV physician was appointed to be available for consultation on medical questions by the PNs.

Supervisor`s notes



Peer Navigator`s notes



RESULTS

- We learned that the appropriate capacity for each PN is 5-7 OPWH for 3 months. Over the 7 months, the supervisor conducted 10 group consultations and approximately 30 individual consultations for each PN. We learned that one of the major obstacles for PN was how to draw appropriate boundaries between themselves and their client - consultant "lived" with the patient's problems.
- Disclosure evolved over time and a commune of people was formed who are able to cooperate and be friends.
- PNs had the opportunity to receive not only supervision support, but also personal therapy sessions. In personal therapy, consultants had the opportunity to work on their own emotional problems, which in turn allowed them to become more stable in working with clients and choose the right path to help the person who was assigned to them.

In the Supervision of PROST project, the following goals were set and achieved for the Supervisor:

- Improvement of consultants' skills
- Getting rid of value judgments
- Finding your own consulting style
- Enrichment with theory and practical knowledge
- Improving communication skills with clients
- Optimal use of opportunities
- Improving the quality of services



Why did I join the project? For me, first of all, it is very valuable that they paid attention to people aged 50+...that was the impetus - why I joined the project. Because they talk about drug addicts, they talk about teenagers, they talk about MSM, but no one ever talks about older people in the context of HIV, as if they don't exist...we don't exist...

Iryna, Peer Navigator

CONCLUSIONS

- Peer navigation was feasible and acceptable to older people with HIV.
- Peer navigators were capable of providing support to multiple OPWH simultaneously and benefited from supervision by a psychologist.
- The major challenge for peer navigators was maintaining boundaries with their clients.
- Flexible supervision according to OPWH's needs was vital for PNs during the war in Ukraine.