

Tailored sexual health promotion for Aboriginal young people encourages condom use even in a pandemic context: evaluation of Take Blaktion during COVID-19

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Background:

Aboriginal young people are a priority population in state and federal STI and HIV strategies. Take Blaktion is a well-known sexual health promotion program that aims to engage Aboriginal young people aged 15 – 29 via social media with culturally appropriate sexual health promotion messaging. The program adopts a strengths-based approach and aims to nudge social norms around condom use and STI testing.

Methods:

The multi-pronged evaluation strategy has included a repeated, cross-sectional survey instrument examining attitudes and behaviours related to STI testing and condom use. Baseline data was collected in 2019 and the survey was repeated in 2021 and 2022. In 2023, a retrospective focus test of all campaign assets produced since 2019 was conducted with Aboriginal young people by Aboriginal researchers using qualitative yarning methodologies.

Results:

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were evident in the survey results. The proportion of young people who reported sex with new/casual partners decreased between baseline (30%) and follow-up (15%) and a similar decline was seen in intention to test (40% baseline to 27%). However, the proportion of young people reporting condom use with new/casual partners increased between baseline (56%) and follow-up (70%) and intention to use condoms also increased (36% baseline to 47%). Around half of young people said they thought their friends used condoms at both baseline and follow up. Focus testing participants found the assets to be highly relatable and effective tools for encouraging behaviour change.

Conclusion:

Findings suggest tailored health promotion continued to encourage positive behaviour change around condom use even in the context of the pandemic when sexual activity and STI testing decreased. Aboriginal young people find the Take Blaktion approach relevant and culturally appropriate.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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