

Developing a digital tool that *actually* tells people where they can get an STI test

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Background/Purpose:

Young people in NSW continue to experience barriers to accessing STI testing, including limited awareness of services, concerns about cost, appointment availability, and difficulties navigating the healthcare system. To help address these challenges, the NSW STI Programs Unit launched an innovative tool on the Play Safe website, which aims to improve access to STI testing by providing personalised STI testing service recommendations based on users' responses to five simple questions.

Approach:

Powered by the healthdirect API, the STI Testing Locator guides users through five questions relating to their bulk billing preference, accessibility requirements, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, age, and postcode. Unlike other tools, it displays primary care testing locations, in addition to specialised sexual health services, made possible by customising the Healthdirect API dataset to suit the needs of the target audience. Search results can be viewed as a list or interactive map, and the locator updates service information every 20 minutes, eliminating the need for manual updates. Individual service landing pages are automatically generated to enhance search engine optimisation (SEO), provide service-specific information, and offer users a clear pathway to make an appointment.

Outcomes/Impact:

Early evaluation data indicates a 240% increase in searches since the new locator launched. By highlighting the availability of STI testing in primary care settings, the locator helps reduce barriers to testing, increase testing in general practice, and ease demand on sexual health clinics, ensuring resources are directed to those who need them most.

Innovation and Significance:

The Play Safe STI Testing Locator is the first it's kind to integrate primary care services into a sexual health service locator, while others only display specialised services and clinics, which many people cannot access (eligibility and location).

This technology can be adapted and implemented by organisations across Australia and has already been modified for the International Students Health Hub website.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None.