

How Aboriginal young people in an urban setting access sexual health information, and the role technology can play

Gardner K¹, Bryant J², Doyle M³, Bolt R⁴

¹Department of Infectious Diseases, University of Melbourne at the Peter Doherty Institute, and the Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Sydney, ²Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW, ³The University of Sydney, ⁴Charles Darwin University

Background: This Aboriginal led study took a strengths-based approach to identify the sources of sexual health information accessed by Aboriginal young people from Western Sydney, and the role of technology in help and information seeking.

Methods: Thematic analysis was conducted of Aboriginal peer-led interviews with 23 young Aboriginal people in Western Sydney collected in December 2019. Peer interviewers were selected in consultation with members of the local Aboriginal community and received research training prior to conducting interviews. Participants were aged 16-24 years.

Results: The internet was used to access and evaluate information about physical symptoms. Participants approached trusted sources, including those with whom they had formal (doctors, teachers, counsellors) and informal relationships (family members, friends), to check the information from the internet was correct and trustworthy. Participants gave special value to information and insight that was gained through lived experience and were most trustful of information from people who had 'been there', showing the value given to intergenerational learning.

Conclusion. Participants used multiple sources for information sharing and fact-checking, suggesting that future educational programs and health initiatives should engage and address the whole of community concerns. Sustained efforts to providing up-to-date and accurate sexual health information and support, decreasing the taboo nature of discussion about sex are needed. Services need to understand and engage with how Aboriginal young people use multiple sources of information, both online and through culturally produced trusted relationships, to assess the value and significance of the health information they need.

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