

HIGH LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH HIV AND STI TESTING AMONG GAY ASIAN MEN IN SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE

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Background: HIV notifications among GAM have risen over the past few years (as seen in NSW) and a disproportionately considerable number of GAM with newly diagnosed HIV are late diagnosis.

Methods: A GAM survey was conducted in Sydney with extensive recruitment both online and offline and in Melbourne with online recruitment only. The survey, available in English and Thai, targeted men from Chinese, Thai, Filipino and South Asian backgrounds.

Results: Of the 604 participants, over one-third (n=214) were of Chinese background. About half were born overseas and had lived in Australia for more than five years (n=297). The men were on average 30 years old (interquartile range=25-37 years old). Over 90% of the men reported their HIV status either known to be negative (n=517, 86%) or positive (n=37, 6%). Of the non-HIV-positive men who had ever tested for HIV, 86% (n=451) had been tested for HIV and 75% (n=395) for other STIs (excluding blood tests) within the past 12 months. Factors independently associated with these men having at least two HIV tests plus comprehensive STI testing (more than three-site including blood testing) in the past 12 months were: being full-time employed (p=0.03); having more male sex partners (p=0.003) and having had condomless sex with regular (p=0.01) or casual male partners (p<0.001) in the past six months; having their latest HIV testing at a sexual health clinic (p<0.001) or at community-based peer testing sites (p=0.003); knowledge of PEP availability (p=0.001); less socialisation with people of the same ethnic background (p=0.003); and recruitment at sites other than sex-on-premise venues (p=0.02) or non-gay community venues or events (p=0.04).

Conclusion: GAM are engaging with HIV and STI testing services. Sexual health clinics and peer-based community testing sites, in particular, have important roles in maintaining GAM's sustained high-level engagement with clinical services.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The study was funded by the Sydney-based CALD Gay Men Action Group (cash and in-kind support from member organisations) and additional in kind support from Victoria AIDS Council. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study. The authors declare no conflict of interest.