

BELONGING AND BECOMING – SEXUAL HEALTH PEER EDUCATION FOR ASIAN GAY MEN

Loc Nguyen¹, Tim Wark¹

¹ACON, Sydney, Australia

Background/Purpose: The 2018 Asian Gay Men's Survey revealed that Medicare-ineligibility, experiences of exclusion from educational campaigns and the wider gay community, and a lack of confidence in negotiating sexual health practices have impacted PrEP knowledge and access among Asian men who have sex with men (MSM), with 29% of participants having not used condoms or PrEP with their casual partners. These experiences have corresponded to higher incidences of HIV notifications among overseas-born Asian MSM compared to Australian-born MSM in NSW.

Approach: ACON hosted three working group sessions with eight community members to co-design a new workshop, based on their lived experiences as Asian MSM (both overseas-born and Australian-born) living in Australia. As a result, a four-week peer-led workshop called 'Belonging and Becoming' was created for Asian MSM aged 18 years and over to connect with others and specifically address lived experiences of identity, cultural diversity, migration, Medicare-eligibility, sexual health and PrEP access.

Outcomes/Impact: Three workshops were delivered in early 2019 (with others planned), engaging 34 participants. Pre-workshop and post-workshop evaluation data revealed that providing Asian MSM a space to connect with other community members helped increase their sexual health knowledge and confidence in relation to HIV, STIs, PrEP, PEP, undetectable viral load (UVL), and testing services as a local or migrant.

Innovation and Significance: The success of this workshop highlights the importance of using a co-design model to create meaningful sexual health content that addresses and resonates with the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse MSM. It also shows the significance of helping migrants feel connected to the gay community to overcome experiences of exclusion, thus, facilitating increased sexual health literacy and an understanding of how to access sexual health services.

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