

BREAKING TRADITION: USING THE INTERNET TO ENHANCE HIV PARTNER NOTIFICATION FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFICULT TO REACH.

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Background/Purpose:

Most Australian adults (89%) use the internet multiple times a day. Social media and online dating apps are often used for anonymous or casual sex. People newly diagnosed with HIV often use the internet themselves, without support to notify their sex partners. Reaching out to people at high risk in this way can enable early access to HIV testing and treatment.

Approach:

Internet based partner notification is a '*search and notify*' method of provider referral. It utilises the internet, social media and health and government databases to find a person at risk of HIV who has no other means of being contacted. A retrospective review of referrals and cases to the Partner Notification Service (including professional, social, cultural, legal and ethical boundaries) was performed.

Outcomes/Impact:

Professional service guidelines and a risk management strategy were developed in consultation with stakeholders including the NSW Ministry of Health. From January 2015 to June 2018, there were 68 referrals of which 39 (58%) contacts were successfully notified of HIV risk. Twenty nine (74%) of these people had follow up testing. Forty nine (75%) were cis men, of which 32 (65%) were gay and homosexually active men. Seventeen (25%) people were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The internet was the only method of enabling notification in 30 (44%) of people. The mean time from referral to notification was 30 days (range 1-142 days). A Partner Notification Network of key non-government, research, health and welfare organisations was formed to guide this work.

Innovation and Significance:

Using the internet for complex HIV partner notification creates an added opportunity for reaching out to people who would otherwise be unaware of their risk. Although time intensive, internet partner notification also provides an effective and contemporary way to increase access to testing for people at high risk.

Disclosure of Interest

None