

COLLABORATION IN SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION STUDENT PLACEMENTS: A CROSS-SECTION OF STUDENTS AS A PRIORITY POPULATION

Authors:

MADDISON STRATTEN¹, WINIFRED ADAMSON¹

¹ Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, HIV and Related Programs Unit

Background:

Sexually active young people under 30 years of age are a priority population in the New South Wales Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) Strategy 2022 – 2026, while higher education institutions are identified as a priority setting for intervention. Caddyshack Project is a sexual health program promoting a positive approach to sex and sexuality for young people. University of Wollongong (UOW) third-year student placements are an opportunity for students in the target audience to gain experience in applying the theory and skills they learned in a professional workplace.

Approach:

Since 2016, Caddyshack Project has hosted third-year students from UOW's Bachelor of Public Health and Bachelor of Communication and Media. Health Promotion and Graphic Design Placement projects varied from; young people's primary care and access to condoms, Arabic community sexual health, international student sexual and reproductive health, Aboriginal sexual health training, and podcasting as digital sexual health education. STI preventative projects have used settings and community approaches to collaboration and co-design.

Outcome:

Over 50 students have been engaged in Caddyshack placements and in doing so, had the opportunity to learn about sexual and reproductive health topics. While students explore, problem solve and design projects within the placement, they also expand their own knowledge which can influence their sexual health literacy, behaviours, protective factors and that of their peers. Increasing knowledge and confidence of sexual health topics is key in preventing STIs, unplanned pregnancy and improving sexual experiences. Caddyshack placements have also guided career choices with at least five students securing ongoing work in the sexual health sector.

Innovation and Significance:

Accepting student placements is mutually beneficial for the professional workplace and for the students. Students add value to program development, bringing the voice and perspective of young people. Placements in the sexual health promotion field act as effective preventative education for students, influencing their own knowledge, choices and sexual lives.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None