

SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS AND KNOWLEDGE AMONG CHINESE-SPEAKING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA

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Introduction: There are growing concerns around the sexual health of international students with high rates of abortion and rising rates of sexually transmissible infections (STIs). In Australia, students from China make up the largest proportion of international students (31%). Our study surveyed Chinese-speaking international students in Australia aged 16 years and over to identify sexual behaviors and knowledge.

Methods: Between March 2018 and May 2018, Chinese-speaking international students were recruited for an online survey through popular social networking site WeChat. The survey was available in Mandarin and included questions on sex education, attitudes and behaviors. Sexual health knowledge was measured using a six-item quiz.

Results: Of the 1130 students reached: 543 completed the survey (71% female, 79% opposite-sex attracted, average age 22 years). Almost one-third had never received school-based sex education (32%). Among students who received sex education outside Australia, the topics covered included biology (95%), HIV/AIDS (76%), contraception (73%) and avoiding STIs (59%). This was similar for students who received sex education in Australia however the latter more frequently reported learning about consent (70%) and sexual harassment (60%). Overall 22% reported having a romantic or sexual partner in Australia; 68% of the same ethnicity and nationality. Forty-seven percent of participants had ever had oral sex, 44% ever had vaginal intercourse and 7% ever had anal intercourse. Of those who had ever had sexual intercourse, 11% reported having an STI test in Australia. On average, participants scored 2/6 on the sexual health quiz: 6% knew that 'many STIs can be treated with antibiotics' and 20% knew that 'chlamydia can be diagnosed with a urine test'.

Conclusion: A substantial proportion of our sample was sexually active, however, sexual health knowledge was poor and STI testing was uncommon. Understanding behaviors and knowledge gaps of Chinese international students is useful for designing targeted health promotion.