

AGE DIFFERENCE IN ATTITUDES TOWARD SAFER SEX PRACTICES IN HETEROSEXUAL MEN USING AN AUSTRALIAN INTERNET DATING SERVICE

Cheng Y¹, McGeechan K^{1,2}, Bateson D¹, Ritter T¹, Weisberg E¹, Stewart M¹

¹ *Family Planning NSW, Sydney, Australia*

² *University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia*

Background: This cross-sectional study investigated STI knowledge, safer sex attitudes and behaviours of sexually active, heterosexual men using an internet dating service and explored factors associated with protective attitudes.

Methods: An anonymous online survey was sent to men who had logged onto an internet dating service within the previous year. Factors associated with discussing STIs before sex and condom use intention with a new partner were analysed.

Results: We analysed 2339 responses. Men had lower STI knowledge scores, lower use of condoms and more beliefs of condoms reducing interest in sex as age increased. Younger men (aged 18-29) were more likely to report intentions of only having sex with a new partner if a condom was used compared to older men. Predictors of having a discussion about STIs with a new partner were older age, higher STI knowledge, greater distress at a potential diagnosis of an STI and stronger future condom use intention. Intention to only have sex with a new female partner if a condom was used was associated with higher STI knowledge, discussing STIs with a new partner and distress at a potential diagnosis of an STI. Men with a higher number of sexual partners in the last year were less likely to report that they would have an STI discussion with new partners or intentions to use a condom with a new partner.

Conclusion: There is a role for Health promotion targeting heterosexual men on internet dating sites to address STI risk. By exploring the factors associated with protective behaviours, education can be more targeted to this group of men.

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