

## RESEARCH BASED TEMPLATE

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# **IDENTIFYING BARRIERS AND PROPOSED ENABLERS TO INTEGRATING SEXUAL HEALTH SCREENING INTO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ANNUAL HEALTH CHECKS (715s) USING A CO-DESIGN MODEL**

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## **Background:**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander annual health check, often referred to by the Medicare Benefits Schedule Item number 715, is an opportunity for a regular comprehensive health assessment including chronic disease and sexual health. However, many 715s are conducted without STI testing, which is considered a routine component assessing sexual health. This qualitative study, conducted within the 'Check it Out, Check it Off' (COCO) study, explores service-identified barriers and proposed enablers to integrating STI testing within 715s at six Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) across Australia.

## **Methods:**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 44 healthcare personnel, including Aboriginal Health Workers/Practitioners and Trainees (n=17), nurses (n=11), GPs (n=10), and other clinic personnel (n=6) across all six ACCHS involved in the COCO study. Interviews were conducted at each health service as part of a pre-intervention co-design process to inform tailored, service-led interventions to increase STI testing within 715 health checks. Findings from each service were presented back to healthcare personnel in a service-specific feedback workshop. Common barriers and proposed enablers across ACCHS within the COCO study are presented here.

## **Results:**

Healthcare personnel identified concerns of shame and stigma in raising sexual health during 715 triaging, and lack of culturally appropriate language for normalizing such conversations. Limited consult time with GPs reduced opportunities for sexual healthcare engagement. Feedback workshops identified strategies for normalizing STI testing during 715s. Common perceived enablers across ACCHSs included language to reduce shame/stigma (e.g., 'a top-to-toe check'), training for healthcare

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providers, incentives, and providing a urine jar at reception to all patients presenting for a 715.

### **Conclusion:**

This qualitative study presents common barriers to delivering STI testing within 715 annual health checks. Using a co-design model, service providers identified strategies, such as normalizing sexual health, to overcome barriers and increase STI testing within annual health checks.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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### **Acknowledgement:**

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