

# ENGAGING CHINESE SPEAKING GAY MEN IN SEXUAL HEALTH PEER EDUCATION

## Authors:

ANGUS MOLYNEUX<sup>1</sup>, TIM CHEN<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ACON, Sydney, Australia

*amolynex@acon.org.au, tchen@acon.org.au*

**Background/Purpose:** Chinese-born gay and homosexually active men (GHAM) face unique barriers to accessing appropriate health promotion and HIV prevention, treatment and care. Fear of disclosure, visa uncertainty, Medicare ineligibility, racism and isolation all affect the ability to negotiate safe sex and access services. For those who have not developed competent English language skills, there are additional barriers.

The 2016 Gay Asian Men Survey revealed that Asian GHAM also had less PrEP/PEP knowledge and fewer sources of HIV/STI information. The number of Asian GHAM who had engaged in condomless anal intercourse with casual partners also increased. According to this survey, GHAM from a Chinese background represent the largest ethnic group (41.2%).

**Approach:** ACON recognised a need to engage Chinese-speaking GHAM to close their knowledge gap through a culturally and linguistically appropriate peer education workshop. The Asian Gay Men's Project and the Young Gay Men's Project collaboratively delivered a peer-led sexual health workshop for GHAM aged 18-30, which ran for 6 weeks and was delivered entirely in Mandarin.

Existing workshop manuals were translated and modified to include more culturally specific issues. Translating content proved difficult, as many colloquial English phrases did not make sense in Mandarin. Participants were recruited through social media and ACON networks.

**Outcome/Impact:** In October 2017, the pilot workshop was delivered with 13 participants retained over 6 weeks, allowing for discussions on sexual health, drugs, relationships and discrimination. While the pre-workshop questionnaire showed imbalanced knowledge about HIV and sexual health in the group, once the workshop was completed, our data showed that participant's knowledge had increased.

**Innovation/Significance:** We believe that this is the first peer-education sexual health workshop for gay men delivered in Australia in a language other than English. While HIV notification rates have been decreasing for Australian-born GHAM, this has not occurred for those born in Asia (31% of GHAM diagnosed in NSW in 2017 were from Asia). In an increasingly divergent epidemic, meaningful engagement of this group is essential to ensure the benefits of HIV prevention technologies are equitably shared.

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