

IMPROVING ACCESS TO SEXUAL HEALTH SCREENING FOR ASIAN SEX WORKERS IN NEWCASTLE

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Background: Sex workers are a priority population in the Third National Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2014-2017, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) sex workers may be particularly vulnerable. Outreach activities are recommended in NSW, but there is little published information regarding their effectiveness, and regarding provision of screening on-site in parlours. HNE Sexual Health introduced mobile outreach in Newcastle in 2012. A nursing team visits Caucasian and Asian parlours, the latter with interpreter, providing on-site screening for chlamydia and gonorrhoea.

Methods: A retrospective data analysis was conducted to improve understanding of the cohort of sex workers currently accessing sexual health services in Newcastle and to compare access by Asian and non-CALD sex workers. Data was extracted from the clinic's database regarding services from January 2011 to November 2016 and demographic information analysed. Location of all services and initial services was compared for non-CALD and Asian sex workers.

Results: Of 505 patients who reported current sex work, almost one third (160 patients) were born in Asian countries, with Mandarin language most often preferred. Face-to-face services occurred most often at the main sexual health clinic (71.9%), with 15.8% services occurring in a fixed location outreach in ACON premises, and 12.3% of services occurring on-site in parlours during mobile outreach. Ninety-one sex workers (18.2%) have only been seen during mobile outreach visits to parlours. Asian sex workers were significantly more likely than non-CALD sex workers to be seen exclusively in mobile parlour outreach (RR 3.56, 95%CI 2.39 – 5.30, $P < 0.0001$). Asian sex workers were also more likely to have their initial service during mobile parlour outreach (RR 2.26, 95%CI 1.54 – 3.31).

Conclusion: Mobile outreach with testing on-site in parlours is a useful strategy for improving access to screening for sex workers, in particular new Asian sex workers.

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