

## ON THE COUCH: PODCASTING AS AN INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION TOOL

MADDISON STRATTEN<sup>1</sup>, WINIFRED ADAMSON<sup>1</sup>, KAITLYN MIDDLETON<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, Wollongong NSW, Australia

### **Purpose:**

The sexual health promotion profession has a responsibility to provide sexual health education through innovative approaches to young people and to the broader sector. The evolution of digital sexual health capacity building is required to provide high quality, accessible content. The flexible, inclusive and on-demand nature of podcasts allows the dissemination of research and knowledge, and increases learner engagement, self-reflection and satisfaction.

### **Approach:**

Caddyshack Project in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) pivoted from delivering face-to-face education to producing live online events, first releasing video (vodcast) and then audio (podcast) episodes to increase reach and engagement. On The Couch (OTC) is in its fourth season of collaborating with experts, practitioners, authors, advocates, and influencers, to explore current social themes, sex positive topics and share stories and insights that matter.

### **Outcome:**

OTC registration and attendance increased by 60% since moving to the live online model. State, national and international registrations increased by 54% demonstrating the scope for digital education, as geographical boundaries are not a barrier for attendance. OTC has a total of 1,787 views on YouTube since the vodcast launch in March 2022 and 693 downloads on the Podbean platform since the June 2024 podcast launch.

Positive feedback from participants, higher engagement on social media plus increased resource orders and website views shows the impact of OTC as a key sexual health promotion initiative by Caddyshack Project. A formal evaluation of OTC will be completed by September.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

The benefits of podcasts as an educational tool are known to improve knowledge retention for professionals compared to journal articles alone. Young people also prefer to learn about sensitive and challenging topics through podcasts, without barriers of embarrassment or discomfort. Podcasting as a sexual health education tool is an innovative strategy which is embraced across the sector and should be further explored to improve digital sexual health capabilities.

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

None