

“WE DON’T TALK ABOUT IT IN MY COUNTRY”: A NEW ZEALAND QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE SEXUAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT ASIAN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN

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Background:

Sex is often taboo and stigmatised in many Asian countries. As a result, many Asian people tend to ignore their sexual health or lack a holistic understanding of sexual health. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Asian men who have sex with men (MSM) are disproportionately affected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), one significant aspect of sexual health for MSM. Asian migrants may face additional challenges to their sexual health. As members of a profession that promotes social justice and human rights, social workers are well positioned to engage in sexual health, including HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, service access and uptake. However, little is known about Asian and migrants’ sexual health, particularly the migrant Asian MSM cohort, from a social work perspective in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Methods:

Nine migrant Asian MSM were recruited and participated in semistructured interviews. This study employed the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach and sexual citizenship as a theoretical framework for data analysis.

Results:

The findings are presented in the creative and powerful form of composite vignettes, which represent the shared sexual health experiences of participants. Four themes were identified: 1) Seeking sexual sanctuary, 2) Coming to terms with being different, 3) Navigating the journey towards sex positivity, and 4) Confronting challenges and shaping a better future.

Conclusion:

The social work profession can play a significant role in supporting marginalised individuals’ sexual health, including migrant Asian MSM. Social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand have the potential to use antioppressive practices to uphold sexual and social justice and provide culturally appropriate support for migrant Asian MSM to become sexual citizens fully.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.