

## **“TAKE 10 TO TEST TODAY”; A CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE SYPHILIS AND STI TESTING IN A REGIONAL CENTRE**

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**Background:** A syphilis outbreak affecting young heterosexual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (hereafter Indigenous) has spread across northern Australia since 2011. In response to this and to high rates of other sexually transmissible infections (STIs), the North Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander STI Action Plan 2016-2021 was developed. One strategy in the Action Plan is to increase STI testing. This presents a challenge in regional centres, where at-risk populations are widely dispersed. A month-long campaign was developed to raise community and clinician awareness, and increase STI testing in Indigenous people aged 15 to 39 years.

**Methods:** Clinical services providing health care to young Indigenous people were provided with education, clinical support, medications and patient participation incentives. A comprehensive media campaign involving campaign branding and distribution via radio, Facebook and print media was undertaken. Other communications included a sexual health website, screen savers and weekly mail-outs. Syphilis testing in the campaign month at three sentinel practices was compared with average monthly testing in the previous year. Regional notifications of infectious syphilis were compared with the average monthly notifications in the previous year.

**Results:** Social media dissemination was increased with paid advertising. There was an 80 per cent increase in testing in 15-39 year olds at the sentinel clinics, when compared with average monthly testing levels in 2016. There was also a significant increase in infectious syphilis notifications in Indigenous people aged 15-39 years in the district, with 18 notifications in the campaign month, more than 2 standard deviations (5.8) above the average number of monthly notifications in 2016 (6.3).

**Conclusions:** This campaign successfully increased STI testing and notifications in the target group. Paid Facebook advertising increased reach of the campaign messaging. Lack of a contractual arrangement with service providers limited the ability to assess testing data.

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