

INEQUITY IN PREVENTION OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION: AN ANALYSIS OF ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

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Background:

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are an ongoing public health concern in Aotearoa. Inequities have been reported in STI exposure; for instance, the rate of gonorrhoea among Māori and Pacific females is estimated to be 6 times higher than for New Zealand European females. Despite inequities in STI exposure, little is known about STI prevention (i.e. access to sexual healthcare, knowledge, and condoms), and how it may vary between demographic groups. Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa (formerly Family Planning New Zealand) is the largest primary care provider of sexual and reproductive health in Aotearoa and undertook a survey to investigate experiences and understanding of STI prevention.

Methods:

A retrospective analysis of Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa survey data collected from June 2023. University of Otago ethics was obtained. Survey items query access to STI prevention (testing, knowledge, healthcare, and condoms). Analysis structure included a descriptive summary of (a) respondent demographic characteristics, and (b) survey item responses. Logistic regression was applied to compare survey item responses between demographic groups (adjusted for age and gender).

Results:

A total of 969 respondents met inclusion criteria. Overall, descriptive statistics indicate some gaps in access to STI prevention. Particular group inequities were also found. In particular, condom access for Māori (OR = 0.34, 95% CI = 0.17, 0.69) and Pasifika (OR = 0.24, 95% CI = 0.10, 0.70) is worse than for non-Māori/non-Pasifika people. Cost was the main reported barrier to condom access. People under 30 are less likely to report having enough understanding about STIs to avoid getting or giving one." (OR = 0.42, 95% CI = 0.32, 0.56) and when to test for STIs (OR = 0.43, 95% CI = 0.32, 0.56).

Conclusions:

In Aotearoa not everybody has equal access to the tools needed to prevent STIs. The inequities in STI prevention appear to align with inequities in STI exposure in young people, Māori and Pasifika. It is vital that STI prevention efforts understand the drivers of inequity and include young people, Māori and Pasifika groups to design solutions to address these inequities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: