

LIVED EXPERIENCES ON THE COUCH: BRIDGING A GAP & SHIFTING ATTITUDES

MADDISON STRATTEN¹, WINIFRED ADAMSON¹, YIXUAN ZOU², DIANA KARAMACOSKA¹

¹ Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, Wollongong NSW, Australia

² School of Public Health, Faculty of Health, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Background:

Podcasts are increasingly recognised as an effective medium in digital sexual and reproductive health (SRH) promotion. [On The Couch](#) (OTC) is an educational podcast and live vodcast that complements professional development and training in the SRH, youth, and community service sectors. OTC uses authentic, peer-led conversations that are accessible and culturally responsive to address current and future workforce needs.

Approach:

OTC stimulates equity-focused thinking and action by addressing poignant themes concerning sexual and gender diversity, disability, culture, STIs, BBVs, consent and respectful relationships. It centres the diverse lived experiences of service-users, advocates, clinicians and academics to uncover biases, mitigate stereotypes, facilitate effective support, and reduce the stigma and shame associated with help-seeking.

Episodes are offered in perpetuity through multi-channel integration, creating a holistic learning ecosystem. OTC equips individuals with the linguistic tools, culturally appropriate resources, and referral pathways that are needed to deliver psychologically safe care, programs, and services that meet community members where they are.

The first evaluation phase included a [published](#) qualitative study exploring how OTC supports young people's SRH in five focus groups with participants aged 18 – 24 (n=18). Phase two is currently underway, incorporating perspectives from the workforce.

Outcomes:

OTC's multi-platform presence has reached a global audience of 11,367 to date, achieved through digital campaigns on social media (>1,700 followers) and electronic direct mail (>2,000 recipients).

Phase one evaluation with young people found that podcasts significantly improved SRH knowledge and shifted attitudes through relatable storytelling and emotional resonance. Young people valued OTC for its conversational tone, accessibility and convenience while highlighting the need for visual enhancements to support multi-modal communication.

Innovation and Significance:

While other podcasts excel in youth engagement or personal empowerment, OTC operates as a capacity building tool bridging the gap between clinical knowledge and community realities, making it an innovative podcast for student and workforce professional development in SRH across Australia.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None