

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO HIV TESTING AMONG PEOPLE BORN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

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Background: In the last decade, people born in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) or South-East Asia (SEA) have had the highest HIV diagnosis rates in Australia for any region of birth. About a third of these notifications occur via late or advanced HIV diagnosis. Early diagnosis is critical for the best treatment and support outcomes for people living with HIV. New testing technologies may help increase testing among SEA and SSA communities. Understanding the barriers to HIV testing, and identifying possible enablers, is needed to increase testing to ensure early diagnosis, reduce likelihood of onward HIV transmission and improve health outcomes.

Methods: This research project is a multi-jurisdictional study, involving a collaboration of researchers and government and non-government organisations. The project involved focus group discussions with people born in SSA and SEA. Focus group discussions in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales explored participants' knowledge of HIV and HIV testing, access to health services, barriers to testing for HIV and ways to increase HIV testing in SSA and SEA communities.

Focus groups involved participants with diverse experiences, including men who have sex with men and people who have lived in Australia for various lengths of time.

Results: Mobility may increase the risk of HIV transmission, particularly for people who travel to high HIV prevalence countries. Common themes from the focus group discussions will be presented and implications for research, practice and policy discussed.

Conclusion: New testing options for HIV such as rapid testing, self-collection kits, and oral testing are now available in Australia. This research addresses a gap in research and practice, and will explore enablers to facilitate HIV testing for migrants from SSA and SEA. This is critical work in increasing testing rates among a priority group.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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