



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

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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## AIMS AND FUNDING

### Objectives:

- To identify barriers and facilitators to HIV testing
- To assess the knowledge and perceived acceptability of new HIV testing strategies (rapid testing, self-testing kits and clinical testing)
- *To identify barriers and motivators to offering HIV testing from the perspective of clinical staff and general practitioners (go see our poster!)*

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- A Healthway Australian Health Promotion Association Graduate Scholarship
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## METHODS

- Focus groups with 77 participants with diverse experiences
  - NSW (1)
  - Victoria (1)
  - SA (2)
  - WA (7)
  
- Thematic analysis
  - Accessing health services
  - Home country experiences
  - Visibility of HIV
  - Safety in Australia
  - Risk perception

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## ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES

Only accessing services when very sick

*“You go when you are sick, I [am] here for 10 years and I don’t have malaria or anything, I don’t go to a doctor” – Male from South Sudan*

*“You don’t need to go to hospital until you have to, because it’s advance stage of sickness or something really terrible” – Male from Africa*

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## HOME COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

Influenced both how they understood HIV and their readiness to test

*“...the fear of the unknown is better than...the benefits of testing...I’d rather not know ...the fear associated with...the perception of how people with HIV are still treated within the African community... there’s this other layer of fear upon fear” – Female from Africa*

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## HOME COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

Experiences of homophobia

*“...I never really checked in Indonesia... because it’s better not to know...once you get HIV, there is nothing you can do. You die. ...and ...you can be arrested for being you” – Male from Indonesia*

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## VISIBILITY OF HIV IN AUSTRALIA

HIV was often seen as being ‘taboo’ or ‘invisible’

*“Where do you test? ...if I have problems, I see a physician here, I see a dental....I haven’t seen any poster of HIV. No testing centres... nobody is dealing with the HIV” – Male from Tanzania*

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## VISIBILITY OF HIV IN AUSTRALIA

Negative stories of HIV positive people – e.g. criminal cases in the media

*“I remember one of my friends asked “so what if you find HIV positive, what do you do?”... [ I said] “you get locked up [in] isolated areas” ...you find you’re HIV positive, you get isolated...you don’t see your family” – Male from South Sudan*

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## SAFETY IN AUSTRALIA

Australia a 'safe' country – HIV doesn't exist.

*“...people think Australia is so safe, it is a safe place...people think it's okay, I can do anything I want even if I don't check with the doctor I am okay” – Male from South Sudan*

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## SAFETY IN AUSTRALIA

'Safety' described the freedom to be gay and to regularly test for HIV.

*“It's okay to know about testing, its okay to know about the gay community” – Male from Asia*

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## RISK PERCEPTION

Most participants described HIV as being for ‘others’, regardless of the behaviour they engaged in

*“...you also don’t think that you are part of that AIDS, you are not one of these people...you just exclude yourself from it, you are not part of it...” – Male from South Sudan*

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## RISK PERCEPTION

HIV was often associated with bad or immoral behaviour

*“...because its only for bad people you know like bad people like drug people and prostitutes or thing you know or people who have free sex, I’m a good girl...I think that there is no chance I get that issue (HIV)” – Woman from Viet Nam*

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## MOTIVATORS TO HIV TESTING

GP-initiated testing was often described as the reason for voluntary testing

For MSM, peers were incredibly important in regards to education and reassuring safety to test

*“I didn’t know anything about testing until last year, and my partner asked me if I’d done it before and I said ‘nah’, but he asked me whether I had unprotected sex and I was like ‘uh, yeah, maybe... twice’. So we’ve done it (HIV testing) together... he told me a lot about PrEP and other stuff you can use.” – Male from China*

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## NEW TESTING METHODS

- Lack of knowledge about HIV testing methods across most groups, including testing at GP
- Having different options to test was seen as important
- Most participants wanted to see HIV offered as part of a ‘general health check up’ rather than a response to a risk behaviour – to avoid disclosure

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## SO WHAT

- Broaden HIV messages to target more than the ‘Australian gay man’
- Promote positive voices and stories
- Offer HIV testing as part of a general health check-up, rather than fixating on sexual behaviour
- Explore new ways to increase HIV testing in different settings – including exploring opportunities to roll out rapid testing and home-testing kits

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**ALL OUR PARTICIPANTS**

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