

HIV in Greater Western Sydney: Tailoring a culturally specific, community-informed response

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Background/Purpose:

While efforts to bring down HIV transmission rates across NSW have been highly successful in inner Sydney, Greater Western Sydney (GWS) has not enjoyed the same downward trends over time. This culturally diverse region now comprises 30% of all new HIV diagnoses in NSW (up from 15% in 2013), with the 2023 NSW annual data report showing, for GBMSM in GWS, 68% of diagnoses were among overseas-born men, particularly those from Asia and Latin America.

Approach:

ACON examined academic and grey literature, engaged in consultation with internal staff and clinical practitioners working with GBMSM living in GWS, and in scientific and community-focused symposia describing the epidemiology of HIV in GWS.

Outcomes/Impact:

ACON produced a policy paper describing systemic, societal, and individual barriers to prevention, testing, and treatment interventions for GBMSM living in GWS, including Medicare eligibility, visa and immigration requirements, language barriers, familial responsibilities, and prejudice from healthcare providers, among other factors. We make 18 recommendations to bring down rates of transmission, including Medicare and migration reform, sexual health services redesign, education and training, and scaling up peer-led, community-based initiatives like ACON's West Ball campaign and Stories Out West project – initiatives integrating art, fashion, music and culture into their design and execution that reached over 31,000 online and 300 in-person participants, respectively.

Innovation and Significance:

GBMSM from these culturally diverse communities face unique barriers to HIV prevention, testing, and treatment. There is increasing concern rates of transmission within these communities will rise if we don't adjust our approach to program and service delivery. The innovative strategies ACON used in the delivery of recent targeted initiatives have successfully engaged these priority populations and we advocate for them to be more widely employed.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

ACON's Policy, Strategy and Research team is funded by the NSW Ministry of Health.