



Barriers and Enablers to accessing Sexual Health for International Students

Why be concerned about Sexual Health ?

- Sexually transmissible infections STIs and HIV have significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals, their relationships and communities at large.
- If left untreated, STIs can be transmitted to sexual partners, facilitate the sexual transmission of HIV, and contribute to the development of severe complications such as infertility, ectopic pregnancy and congenital infection.
- HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, which is where our body fights infection. If left untreated, HIV will damage the immune system to the point where Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) develops. AIDS is the life-threatening condition of late-stage HIV where a person's immune system is too weak to fight off even minor infection

NSW newly diagnosed HIV (Jan - June 19)

- 142 new diagnosis
- 114 where men who have sex with men (MSM)
- 75 overseas-born
- 18/75 had evidence of being infected in the last 12 mths
- 35/75 had evidence of late diagnosis
- 14/35 in the 20 to 29 age group, and most had only recently arrived in Australia)

NSW Chlamydia notifications rates 2018

- 388 notifications per 100,000 population, 5% higher compared to 2017 and 28% higher compared with 2014
- Chlamydia notification rates was the higher in the 15 and 29 age groups.

Background

- 2018 NSW Play Safe Program International Students consortium was formed
- Membership – approximately 32 services/organisations
- Consortium's purpose: to inform and support the development/scale up of sexual health activities for international students
- Literature review conducted to identify the barriers and enablers to accessing sexual health for international students



Information presented today

- Comes from peer reviewed journal articles, conference abstracts, Government and non-Government reports
- Australian specific studies and reports (expect for sexual health knowledge)
- Relates to the barriers and enablers to accessing sexual health services for international student/young CALD people aged 18 to 29



International student's sexual health education and behaviours

- Adolescents and young people in Asia-Pacific countries are provided limited sexual health education
- More likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours (ie unprotected sexual intercourse) when compared to domestic students
- Association between sexual risk-taking behaviour and limited sexual health knowledge



Barriers to sexual health for international students

- Limited knowledge and understanding of:
 - Overseas health cover
 - Australian health system
 - Accessing sexual health services
- Cost and affordability of sexual health care
- Stigma, beliefs, fear of discrimination
- Confidentiality concerns



Enablers to sexual health for international students

- Sexual health education during university lectures, digital mediums and online resources
- Same-sex and cultural group sessions for some (female) students
- When accessing services international students want:
 - confidentiality
 - expert staff
 - anonymous counsellors
 - online advisors
 - doctors and providers with similar backgrounds to students and
 - education programs



So where to next:

- Develop and promote a sexual and reproductive health one stop shop (website/hub) for international students and those who engage with international students
- Hub with provide links to evidence based information and services
- Developed in consultation with international students
- Completion data 30 June 2020



Acknowledge:

- Rutuja Dandgaval
- Members of the international students consortium
- STI Programs Unit

Contact details:

Carolyn.slattery@health.nsw.gov.au