



It is with great pleasure we announce the release of the **Barriers to HIV testing for people born in South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa: final report.**

Over the past decade, Australia has seen an increase in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) notifications among people born in sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia. People living in Australia who were born in these regions have the highest rates of HIV diagnosis by region of birth and are overrepresented in late or advanced presentations of HIV infection.

The aim of this study was to find out what stopped people from testing for HIV and what could we do to increase testing. Eleven focus group discussions were held with 77 people born in people born in sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia, living in Western Australia, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. Eleven interviews were also conducted with GPs exploring their experiences testing patients for HIV from these two regions.

KEY FINDINGS

For people born in sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia, there are a number of barriers to accessing HIV testing. These are complex and include both structural and sociocultural factors.

Many participants from these regions knew very little about HIV in Australia, particularly where to go for testing. Most had seen very little HIV-related material (such as pamphlets or online information) – when they did, it targeted men who have sex with men. Participants reported that the images and information used did not reflect people from their communities or their needs.

There was a reluctance to test for HIV due to a fear of testing positive. This fear came from the perception of HIV as a ‘death sentence’; criminal cases of HIV being reported in the media; or stories of people on temporary visas who are living with HIV being unable to obtain permanent residency.

Many participants wanted HIV testing to be offered by GPs. They wanted it to be included as part of a general health check-up, rather than focusing on specific behaviours. For those not regularly visiting a doctor, they wanted HIV testing offered at community events and/or settings, or at home.

Most GPs indicated that they initiated HIV testing with their patients, with few patients requesting a test. GPs described concern about offering HIV testing. There was a fear of offending patients; causing anxiety; or being seen as ‘targeting’ patients because of their country of birth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback from participants, a total of 15 recommendations for policy, practice and research are proffered in brief. These recommendations have a focus on interventions to increase HIV-testing that are multi-strategic and community-led.

Findings suggested a need to broaden the salience of HIV messages and explore further opportunities to work with GPs to increase uptake of HIV testing. Exploring new and novel ways to increase access to testing including consideration of rapid testing or self-collection kits in community-based settings is also critical.



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Many individuals contributed to this research. We are extremely grateful for their time and insight. We would like to thank the project steering group, the Western Australia advisory group, the focus group facilitators, and the volunteers for this project. A full list of individuals and supporting organisations can be found in the inside of the report.

ACCESSING THE REPORT

The report along with other project materials is now available on the SiREN website at:
<https://siren.org.au/project-overview-barriers-to-hiv-testing/>

Sincerely, the project team -

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HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT COPAHM?

The Community of Practice for Action on HIV and Mobility (CoPAHM) is for those interested in being part of the collaboration for action on HIV and Mobility. The CoPAHM is an alliance of over 80 stakeholders from government and non-government organisations, research institutions, community groups, and national peak bodies. The role of the CoPAHM is to increase partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders to facilitate policy, research and practice efforts regarding HIV and mobility.

For more information, and to join, please visit <https://siren.org.au/hiv-mobility/community-of-practice-for-action-on-hiv-and-mobility/>

