

Barriers and enablers to HIV testing among adult women from South East Asia living in Western Australia

FINAL FINDINGS



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Aims and Funding

- To explore the barriers to HIV testing among adult women from SEA living in Western Australia.
- To explore the enablers to HIV testing among adult women from SEA living in Western Australia.
- To make recommendations regarding access and use of HIV testing services among adult women from SEA living in Western Australia.

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Methods

- Three focus group discussions with 21 participants:
 1. International students on student visa (14).
 2. Women with Australian citizenship/ Permanent visa (7).

Thematic analysis:

- Experiences with health services
- Perception of HIV and HIV testing
- Lack of knowledge and lack of awareness of HIV testing
- Enabling HIV testing among migrant populations

Experiences with health services

Negative experiences were common among international students

“Waiting list, yeah and the waiting list is one week. So my cold is already better when I saw the doctor.” (Woman from Indonesia, 30-35, 1st group)

“When I was still a student using the student visa, it was so painfully expensive anyway to go to the doctor”. (Woman from Indonesia, 29, 3rd group)

Experiences with health services

Experiences with health services in country of birth

“So I think most Asian people we don’t prevent it we go there when we are sick.” (Woman from Indonesia, 25, 1st group)

“I think I feel in here the language is a big problem yeah when we get sick and go to the doctor we don’t know anything”.
(Woman from Viet Nam, 39, 2nd group)

Experiences with health services

While those with permanent residency had positive experiences with health services

“The reason why I want to stay back in this country because the health system there is very good.” (Woman from Viet Nam, 38, 2nd group)

“I mean you get your Medicare, you have everything pretty much covered”
(Woman from Philippines, 40-45, 2nd group).

“Yeah I do much checkup for general checkup every six months for myself for everything” (Woman from Viet Nam, 38, 2nd group)

Perception of HIV and HIV testing

Culture influenced how HIV and HIV testing was perceived among most participants

“It is that bad things happen only to bad people not for good people like us its shame for me to do that you know.” (Woman from Viet Nam, 38, 2nd group)

HIV and sex are taboo

“In our community we also have never talked about it, we never mention it unless there is a problem that there is someone & you know they have that some kind of sickness & we talk about it.” (Woman from Vietnam, 38, 2nd group)

Judgment and isolation

“The family & community like... I don't know but I think my community they still think like a bit too straight, they will just like if you do the test then you did something, you did something so that's really a barrier for me to if I want to do the test.” (Woman from Indonesia, 26, 3rd group)

Lack of knowledge and awareness

Participants had difficulty accessing information on HIV testing, the services that provide the test, and information about HIV transmission and prevention.

“I think also for migrants maybe information because we don’t know if I want to take HIV test, like where to go, how much is it, there is not information at all?” (Woman from Indonesia, 25, 3rd group)

Limited advertisements on HIV

“To be honest you know, I have been here ten years and I have never heard about HIV.” (Woman from Viet Nam, 38, 2nd group)

Limited number of sexual health centers

“Most of these centers, a lot of them are concentrated in the CBD... A lot of people in outer suburbs that are not going to make that trip in the city and try to explain to everyone... but what if we don't want to go to the GP, we should have more of these clinics..” (Woman from Malaysia, 45+, 2ND group)

Enabling HIV testing among migrant populations

Participants described taking an HIV test if it was part of the annual checkup

“You never know how you are going to get that, so you need to test regularly....Its important especially for teenagers or practicing age group to have regular check for HIV.” (woman from Indonesia, 27, 1st group)

Promoting HIV testing

Education was considered the most important facilitator to raise awareness on a specific health issue especially, since women have a significant impact on their families and community members.

“I didn’t know this, the, the paid uhh, advertisement like in Instagram or in Snap chat even its something say in pop up in the story in when you scroll the story and its pop-up.” (Woman from Indonesia, 26, 3rd group)

Promoting HIV testing

- **Women empowerment and reducing the stigma**

“It starts from the mums, from us you know if we don’t educate our people in our families then nothing is going to happen.” (Woman from Philippines, 40-45, 2nd group).

- **Making it part of the regular STI testing**

“Why they can’t make it a bit more you know broader like have yourself tested for STI, for any STI’s....Go and get yourself tested for STI.” (Woman from Malaysia, 45+, 2nd group)

Communication channels

- **Social media, visual ads and advertisements**

“I think we need more testing clinics as long as information is being put out widely to inform people where these clinics could be.” ???

- **Community events**

“I think if we put the knowledge, the information like news or story that is better for us to understand, if it is just you know the information, I feel boring about it, I don't have the patience to read all of it.” ???

- **Yearly reminders**

“I think the government keep reminds women every two years to do pap smear, I think they can do the same HIV send a letter to remind you ... this is a great way to the test as well.” ???

Types of HIV testing

- During the group discussions types of HIV testing were discussed such as Rapid testing and Home-based testing.
- Some of them were surprised about the rapid testing and considered taking it.
- Most participants were not familiar with the different types of HIV testing especially the rapid and home-based testing.

“...there is another testing like a rapid test it will be more convenient to do by yourself-it's really very good.” (Woman from Indonesia, 41, 2nd group)

“I'm more than happy to do it here now you know what I mean...yeah.” (Woman from Philippines, 45+, 2nd group)

Reluctant to test for HIV

However, some women suggested that even if the test is free, people from their community were not encouraged to take the test and found there was no need.

“The rapid test can be as little with only 3 bucks or something like that yeah, yeah because a lot of GO and NGO support the country suppose the rapid test for the whole country but I find that, I found that a lot of people still reluctant to do the test..” (Woman from Myanmar, 30, 3RD group)

So what?

- Barriers facing migrant women living in WA need to be addressed effectively.
- Testing for HIV requires work with community members to remove the stigma associated with HIV through open form discussions.
- Increasing the focus on the benefits associated with testing for HIV regularly: reducing the risk and early management.

So what?

- HIV testing should be easy, accessible and affordable among all migrant populations.
- Improving knowledge and awareness on HIV and HIV testing through open forms, petition forms, and religious meetings.
- Education is critical for HIV prevention programs. Material promoted should be culturally and linguistically appropriate, easy to understand and entertaining.

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Thank you