

Project update: February 2020

Stage One: Qualitative interviews and focus group discussions around access to sexual health and blood-borne virus services in Australia



Data collection for Stage One has been finalised in WA and will shortly commence in other states. Below are some of the preliminary emerging themes which will be further explored:

- Testing conducted as part of Australian entry requirements can create a perception that further STI and BBV testing is not needed: *“So they believe they’re screened already, everything is good”*.
- Pre-entry testing also cultivates a belief that there is less risk of contracting STIs and BBVs in Australia: *“If you are found with HIV, Australia don’t bring you... So, with all those restrictions, people now say ‘maybe the place is safe’”*.
- Cultural stigma around STIs and BBVs affects willingness to be tested in Australia and also affects help-seeking behaviours (e.g. not seeking testing from regular GP who is from the patient’s country of origin).
- Some migrants are not used to requesting specific medical procedures from doctors on the basis that it could be interpreted as being ‘disrespectful’. Due to economic and other barriers to health service access in countries of origin, there is often not a culture of seeking testing in the absence of symptoms.
- There is also some confusion about what doctors are testing for when blood is taken: *“Can anyone go for a check-up for particular things? But the thing is the problem is we don’t know. One thing I went to the doctor for check-up, blood taken, all that kind of thing, and something that I didn’t understand was whether all these things have been tested or not ...”*.
- Respondents seem to have more knowledge of HIV, compared to other STIs and BBVs.
- There is a lack of knowledge about the availability and effectiveness of HIV treatments in Australia: *“I don’t know in Australia whether - how much you pay for the treatment. I haven’t heard about it. I don’t know whether it’s for free, Medicare, healthcare, those things”*. This lack of knowledge may affect willingness to seek testing.

Please note that these are only preliminary impressions and principles of grounded theory research will be followed to investigate these and other themes in further detail.

Stage Two: Knowledge, attitudes, behaviour and practices survey



An English-language survey instrument (online and paper) has been developed for Stage Two. The survey is now being pre-tested through a method known as panel consensus. Panels will comprise people from Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia and North-East Asia in all participating states (SA, WA, Victoria and Queensland). Three rounds of pre-testing (involving 54 participants) will take place with a view to identifying problems with survey wording, instructions or format. The English survey instrument will be revised based on the panel findings and will then be sent for translation. By the end of February, stakeholders will receive an email seeking their input on priority languages for translation. A rigorous translation protocol has been developed.

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Peer researchers



MiBSS is funding the Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia, Relationships Australia (SA) and the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (Victoria) to employ peer researchers (Queensland partners are funded by a grant from the Sexual Health Research Fund). Peer researchers have now been recruited in all states. Peer researchers will be involved in facilitating pre-test panel discussions and recruiting participants for the finalised survey. Curtin has developed a number of training resources to support peer researchers including a manual, narrated slides and a video.

Other outputs



The Curtin MiBSS team presented a poster at the ASHM Conference in September 2019. The poster summarised the findings from a scoping review around modes of administering STI and BBV surveys to migrant populations. The scoping review has also been submitted for publication.

Proposed timeline*

Task / event	Commencement date	Completion date
Qualitative data collection	November 2019	May 2020
Pre-testing round 1	February 2020	April 2020
Pre-testing rounds 2 and 3	May 2020	June 2020
Translation	June 2020	July 2020
Survey goes live	August 2020	2021 (month to be confirmed at later date)

**Timeline is subject to change*

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