

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN METHODS OF MEETING SEXUAL PARTNERS AND SEXUAL PRACTICE AMONG HETEROSEXUALS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY PERFORMED IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

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Background:

The association between meeting partners online and sexual practices has been under-studied in heterosexuals. This study aimed to examine the associations between the methods of meeting partners with sexual practices, as well as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), in heterosexuals.

Methods:

We conducted a survey among heterosexuals attending the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre between March and April 2019. This survey asked about the methods through which participants had met their sexual partner(s), sexual practices and intravenous drug use (IVDU) over the past 3 months. Participants' HIV/STI (chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis) status was obtained from clinical testing. A multivariable logistic regression was used to examine the association between each method of meeting partners and the participants' sexual practices, IVDU, and STI status.

Results:

A total of 698 participants (325 males, 373 females) were included in the study. The majority of participants reported using only one method to meet partners (68.3% males, 65.7% females, $p=0.0462$). Males most commonly met partners at social-venues (e.g. bar, pub, party) (38.8%, $n=126$), whilst females most commonly met through friends/family (47.7%, $n=178$). Paying for sex was associated with males meeting partners at sex-venues (AOR=145.34, 95%CI: 26.13-808.51) and the internet (AOR=10.00, 95%CI: 3.61-27.55). There was no association between IVDU and methods of meeting. Social-venues were associated with condomless vaginal sex in males (AOR=3.31, 95%CI: 1.94-5.71) and females (AOR=2.58, 95%CI: 1.61-4.13) and testing STI positive in males (AOR=3.04, 95%CI: 1.24-7.48) and females (AOR=3.75, 95%CI: 1.58-8.89).

Conclusion:

Heterosexuals that met sexual partners at social-venues had a more than threefold risk of testing positive for STIs, indicating that heterosexuals may benefit from health promotion campaigns that are delivered through a more public setting.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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