

“MOVING FROM ONE ENVIRONMENT TO ANOTHER, IT DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY CHANGE EVERYTHING.” EXPLORING THE TRANSNATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF ASIAN-BORN GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN NEWLY ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA

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Background

Asian-born gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) who are newly arrived in Australia are at a higher risk of acquiring HIV than Australian-born gbMSM. We used a social constructionist framework to explore HIV knowledge and prevention strategies used by newly-arrived Asian-born gbMSM.

Methods:

Twenty four Asian-born gbMSM, aged 20-34 years, attending Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, who arrived in Australia in the preceding five years, participated in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically.

Results:

Participants described hiding their sexual identities in their country of origin due to fear of judgement and discrimination resulting from exposure to sexual identity and HIV related stigma in their countries of origin. Despite feeling more sexual freedom and acceptance in Australia, many were still not forthcoming with their sexual identity due to internalised feelings of stigma and shame. Exposure to stigma in their country of origin led many to report anxiety around HIV testing in Australia due to a fear of testing positive. Some described experiencing racism and lack of acceptance in the gay community in Australia, particularly on dating apps.

Conclusion:

Fear of discrimination and judgement about their sexual identity can have a significant impact on Asian-born gbMSM living in Australia, particularly in terms of social connectedness. Additionally, HIV-related stigma can contribute to anxieties around HIV testing.

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