

Supernatural beliefs, religious affiliations, and HIV testing among recently arrived Asian-born men who have sex with men in Australia

Authors:

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Background:

HIV testing rates among recently arrived (<5 years) Asian-born men who have sex with men (MSM) in Australia remain suboptimal. Research with MSM in East Asia indicates that belief in supernatural determinants of health (supernatural beliefs) may be an important barrier to greater HIV test uptake. We examined potential associations between supernatural beliefs and HIV testing among recently arrived Asian-born MSM in Australia.

Methods:

In 2019, study data were collected through an online survey. Eligibility criteria: >18 years old, identified as a man, born in Asia, arrived in Australia within the past five years, reported ever having sex with another man, and never diagnosed with HIV. Supernatural belief was measured as the extent to which one felt that health was influenced by supernatural forces. Measures of association were estimated with multiple logistic regression while controlling for age, sexual behaviours, educational attainment, years living in Australia, government health insurance, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation.

Results:

Of 186 eligible study participants, 5.9% held supernatural beliefs. Participants with supernatural beliefs were significantly less likely to have tested for HIV in the past year. The adjusted predicted probability of not testing for HIV in the past year was 44.8% among those who held supernatural beliefs (95% CI: 30.5-59.2%), but only 5.2% among those who did not hold supernatural beliefs (95% CI: 1.9-8.6%). Religious affiliation was not significantly associated with testing for HIV.

Conclusion:

Supernatural beliefs may be an important but underappreciated barrier to HIV testing among recently arrived Asian-born MSM in Australia.

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