

Using the NSW Play Safe STI prevention program to deliver targeted COVID-19, sex and dating messaging to higher-risk young people

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Background/Purpose:

Play Safe is the primary STI prevention website and digital communications program aimed at young people aged 16-29 in NSW. The program engages young people at higher sexual risk, and has successfully delivered STI prevention digital communications to this group. As part of the comprehensive COVID-19 public health response, NSW Health identified young people as requiring targeted COVID-19 prevention and testing messages.

Approach:

NSW Health COVID-19 messaging was adapted to align with Play Safe's design and peer-to-peer tone of voice, and delivered to higher risk young people, building from the program's evidence base of effectively engaging this audience. Features included a specific COVID-19 directory page, with content about sex, dating, relationships and well-being, and promoted via a targeted social media campaign, concurrent with the program's regular sexual health messaging.

Outcomes/Impact:

The campaign was implemented from July 1-14 2020 on Facebook and Instagram, targeting high-risk young people aged 16-29 in NSW. The campaign received 121,363 impressions, with a reach of 69,776. There were 2,633 clicks through to the COVID-19 webpage on Play Safe (2.1% Click-Through-Rate (CTR); \$0.19 Cost per Click (CPC)). The campaign received highly positive response from the target group (90% positive), the majority of campaign engagement saw young people tagging each other in the comments. The most viewed content on the page related to Sex and COVID-19, followed by Solo Sex, Technology and Safe Sex, and Learning to Love Your Body.

Innovation and Significance:

COVID-safe messaging has been successfully aligned with the existing Play Safe platform for STI prevention and behaviour change targeting high-risk young people in NSW. The initial campaign will be supplemented with further campaigns and targeted messaging while the page content is refreshed regularly with new information about COVID-19, dating and sex for young people.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None