

# **FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS AFFECTING YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESSING STI TESTING SERVICES AT A SINGLE CENTRE**

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## **Background:**

Young people in Australia are disproportionately affected by STIs, and the majority of these are estimated to remain undiagnosed. Although the barriers have been well described, there is a general paucity of literature evaluating the facilitators to young people seeking sexual healthcare, especially in metropolitan areas. The present study aimed to evaluate factors affecting young people attending an STI service at a single centre in Perth, WA.

## **Methods:**

14 semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with young people (aged 18-29) to evaluate their experience of utilising STI testing services at a single specialist sexual healthcare centre. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded for meaning and analysed for the main themes.

## **Results:**

Eight facilitators and four barriers were found. Facilitators to accessing care included: positive qualities of staff, non-judgemental approach to care, specialised sexual healthcare, convenience, confidentiality, low cost, prior sexual health education and a positive online presence. Staff qualities and specialised sexual health care were particularly strong themes. Barriers were similar to those previously described in the literature, and these included: perception of stigma, uncertainties surrounding the consultation, the gender of the clinician and significant wait times. Compared to published literature, clinician gender was a relatively novel finding.

## **Conclusion:**

Novel facilitators for accessing STI testing services were found at the sexual health centre, in addition to previously well described barriers. These findings can be used to ensure health services offering STI testing are accessible to young people.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.