

What do Young People in High-Income Countries Want in a Sexual Health Service? A Systematic Review.

Authors:

Gan J¹, Kula V², Chow E^{3,5}, Fairley CK^{3,4}, Kong F⁵, Hocking J⁵, Ong JJ^{3,4,6}

¹ Melbourne Medical School, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, Australia

² Monash University School of Rural Health, Bendigo, Australia

³ Central Clinical School, Monash University, Australia

⁴ Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Carlton, Australia

⁵ Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, Australia

⁶ Department of Clinical Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Background:

There are upward trends of sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates among young people (YP) in high-income countries. We aimed to summarize the factors that influence YP to attend a sexual health service, to optimize how services are delivered.

Methods:

We conducted a systematic review (Prospero: CRD42020179720) using PubMed, EMBASE, PsychINFO, and CINAHL. The search was performed on January 10th, 2020 for publications between January 2000 - January 2020. Additional articles were handpicked from the references of previous systematic reviews. Two reviewers independently screened articles and any discrepancies were resolved by a third reviewer. Studies were included if they were performed in high-income countries and contained data on YP (<26 years). Two authors independently extracted data on the characteristics of STI testing services that YP preferred. We categorized these characteristics using the framework of a social-ecological model.

Results:

We identified 1441 publications and examined 219 full texts. Eleven papers were added from additional sources. In the final review, 63 papers were included. We found 33 papers that addressed “*individual*” factors, 63 papers that addressed “*service*” factors and 15 papers that addressed “*societal*” factors. At an individual level, there was a need for improved sexual health education and testing experiences. Regarding service factors, there were notable differences in preferred testing services and methods amongst different subgroups of YP (such as sexual and ethnic minorities, and those who have had previous STIs). A common theme at the societal level was the need to address the societal stigma associated with STIs/HIV.

Conclusion:

To facilitate STI testing amongst YP, there is a need to address factors from all socio-ecological levels; tailoring services to optimize positive testing experiences for YP. In addition, understanding and accounting for distinct preferences from subgroups of YP could increase demand for STIs/HIV testing services for those at greatest need.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

All authors declare no conflicts of interests.