

‘DISCREET LIFE’ – AN INNOVATIVE HIV TESTING COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN TARGETING HETEROSEXUAL MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (MSM) IN NSW.

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Background/Purpose:

NSW has made significant progress toward its goal of virtual elimination of HIV transmission by 2020, but not all populations benefited from declines in new notifications. Declines in HIV notifications among MSM have been greater in inner Sydney, which have large gay-identified male populations compared to other parts of NSW. Sexual health services identified challenges in engaging heterosexual MSM through existing testing communications targeted at gay-identifying/community attached MSM. So, the ‘Discreet Life’ campaign was developed to increase testing in heterosexual MSM using advertising in online hook-up apps and public sex locations (beats).

Approach:

The media strategy involved messages delivered at trigger moments when MSM use hook-up apps and beats and are considered most receptive. Market research (online discussion forum) with the target audience was undertaken to inform the strategy, with participants recruited via hook-up apps and sex on premise venues. The campaign ran April-December 2019.

Outcomes/Impact:

562,978 individuals were shown the geo-targeted digital advertising, while 64,443 people engaged with the digital advertising prompting 51,512 visits to the campaign webpage www.health.nsw.gov.au/hiv-test (646% increase compared to the same period/previous year). There was a 75% increase (n=9,533) compared to the same period/previous year) in people using ‘HIV testing’ search terms in internet browsers before visiting the campaign webpage. Impact measures using ‘intention to test for HIV’ indicators, included: 2,071 webpage visitors who searched for a GP; 1,091 webpage clicks for HIV rapid testing, and; 402 registrations for dried blood spot self-sampling testing.

Innovation and Significance:

‘Discreet Life’ was an innovative campaign targeting hidden MSM not engaged by previous HIV communications. The campaign resulted in high-levels of advertising engagement and indicators suggesting an intention to test after campaign engagement. Informed by market research with a previously unknown audience, the campaign responded to identified barriers to testing through use of digital and traditional media.

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