

Ask Nurse Nettie: What young people in New South Wales (NSW) want to know from an online sexual health nurse

Authors:

Blake S¹, Kenigsberg A¹, Forbes C¹, Ewing M¹, McNulty A^{1,2,3}, de Vries S⁴, Mao L⁵, Janssen M⁴, Bourne C^{2,4,6}

¹ NSW Sexual Health Infolink, ² Sydney Sexual Health Centre, ³ School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of NSW, ⁴ NSW Sexually Transmitted Infections Programs Unit, ⁵ Centre for Social Research in Health, University of NSW, ⁶ The Kirby Institute

Background:

Providing accessible, trusted and evidence-based information for young people is important for their sexual health. Nurse Nettie is an avatar embedded in NSW Health's sexual health education website *Play Safe*. It allows young people to ask a question and receive a personalised response from a specialist nurse within 24 hours.

Methods:

Nurse Nettie queries from January 2019 to December 2019 were reviewed. Up to four issue codes were assigned to each query by the responding nurse. All codes were collated into six major, non-exclusive themes: Prevention, Testing, Treatment, Impact, Sex & Relationships, Engagement and specific Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI) or Blood Born Viruses (BBV).

Results:

210 queries were received from NSW residents aged 15-29 with 57.6% identifying as female and 42.4% as male. The two most common themes were Testing (47.6%) and Prevention (46.7%). A higher proportion of females than males asked about Testing (56.2% vs 36.0%). A higher proportion of males than females asked about Sex & Relationships (36.0% vs 14.1%), which for males, most frequently concerned sexual functioning (9.0%), anatomy/physiology (9.0%) and sexual debut (6.7%). Specific STI/BBVs were mentioned in 10.5% of queries. Of these, human papillomavirus (HPV) was the most common (68.2%), followed by herpes simplex virus (HSV) (45.5%) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) (27.3%).

Conclusion:

The most common themes raised by young people in NSW aligned with the objectives of Nurse Nettie: to encourage STI testing and deliver sexual health promotion messages. Interestingly, our data suggest the need for psychosocial resources to support young men regarding sexual functioning and anatomy/physiology. Overall, interest in viral STIs was greater than in bacterial STIs. Despite the steep decline in HPV prevalence among young people in Australia, HPV remains a concern for this cohort.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None
