

MORE THAN “A CONDOM EVERY TIME”: MANAGING STIS IN A BIOMEDICAL HIV PREVENTION ERA.

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Background/Purpose:

With the advent of biomedicine such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and treatment as prevention (TasP), the decline in condom use among gay and bisexual men (GBM) has accelerated. Subsequently, STI notifications have increased.

Now, practitioners are facing a challenge of how to manage increasing STI rates without undermining messages that promote combination HIV prevention (CHP) strategies like PrEP and TasP.

Traditionally, the approach towards HIV prevention and STI prevention were the same; condom reinforcement coupled with regular testing and treatment. While similar, they were promoted rather separately.

However, if we are to reduce rates of HIV and STIs, new approaches towards how we promote comprehensive sexual health are vital.

Approach:

We developed an STI campaign using the framework of an existing multi-year, highly recognisable CHP platform, *Ending HIV* (EH).

This was unique in that STIs were the central focus even though EH had, until then, been explicitly about HIV prevention.

The aesthetic of the EH design was modified while maintaining key prevention, testing and treatment components.

Language was crafted to speak explicitly to STIs. Specifically, condoms were framed as a choice for those seeking to prevent STIs broadly.

Outcomes/Impact:

An independent evaluation of GBM found that after seeing the campaign:

- 87% correctly understood the STI messages;
- 68% thought the campaign was highly engaging;
- 43% were highly motivated to have regular tests;
- 62% agreed the campaign served as a very useful reminder to test; and
- 32% indicated the campaign prompted them to seek out further information

The campaign was well-received and described as ‘eye-catching’ and ‘modern’.

Innovation and Significance:

The campaign put HIV and STIs in the same spotlight and was the first Australian STI awareness initiative developed using the strategy of a CHP model. It demonstrates that it is possible to address STIs as part of the HIV response.