Insights into the Barriers and Motivators Impacting Chlamydia Screening Rates amongst Male Students

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Overview

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Background

- One in eight of the UK population aged between 16 and 24 years
- This group accounts for about half of newly diagnosed STIs (sexually transmitted infections)
- Chlamydia is growing (NHS)
- Individuals within the 16-24 years age range account for 65% of new Chlamydia cases
- Almost equal split between males and females
- 1.3 million individuals attended NHS clinics in 2009 only 140,000 were men

Recent Chlamydia Screening Initiatives

- National Chlamydia Screening Programme
- Screening rates up but low amongst males
- 1 in 10 individuals tested are men
- NHS campaign: “Sex Worth Talking About:”
  “Easy, everyday and normal to have discussions about contraception between partners, parents and health care professionals”
- Low levels of awareness amongst this sample
- The Chlamydia Outreach Advice Screening Treatment (COAST)
  http://thensmc.com/resources/showcase/case-studies-home.html

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Social Marketing & Behaviour Change Theory

- Exchange Theory
  (Bagozzi, 1978; Maibach et al, 1993)

- Stages of Change Model
  (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1982)

- Social Cognitive Theory
  (Bandura, 1986; Maibach & Cotton, 1995)

Research Methods

- Random sampling approach
- 147 male university undergraduate students at various campus locations were surveyed using a structured questionnaire
- 58 depth interviews with students
- 3 focus groups of students
- 4 sexual health clinic nurses interviewed
Quantitative Findings

• 96% [n=141]) were sexually active
• 30% (n=29) had a STI in the past
• 62% [n=18] said that they had found out about their infections through previous sexual partners
• 51% [n=72]) are screened less than once a year
• 16% (n=23) had never been screened
• 36% were last tested following unprotected sex
• 9% responded to advertising (health promotion)
• 71% (n=105) of students unaware of free university Chlamydia screenings

Qualitative Findings (i): Myths and Barriers

• Peer perception:
  – “Every time I go to get screened, the girls always laugh and ask what I’ve caught now. So I try to keep my visits quiet. But then if they find out I went, they definitely think I have something.”
  – “You tell your mates you’re going to the clinic and you’re known as ‘AIDS boy’”
• “I have heard that they literally stick something down you, and it kills. Why on Earth would I go through that?”
• “You sit there, and quite frankly, you feel quite dirty.”
• Lack of information and advertising impact: “They’re all the same, and none of them have made me interested in screening.”
• Embarrassment when calling the clinics, and when waiting for appointments
• Afraid of results

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Qualitative Findings (ii): Logistics & Service

• “I am unsure as to where the clinics are. But then again, even if I did know, I have no real means of transport to get there as I don’t drive.”

• “I do go every month. This is simply because my father took me to a clinic when I became sexually active. Ever since then I’ve gone regularly”.

• “Try doing third-year pharmacy, then try and find time to go during the times they give you.”

• No weekend screening times

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Qualitative Findings (iii): Motivators

• A sufficient exchange (i.e. benefits & incentives)

• Parental and peer advice/encouragement

• Being able to openly discuss sexual issues within the community

• Requirement to adopt behaviour as a result of societies, course, enrolment, etc.

• Group participation

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Conclusions

- Chlamydia screening information and advertising has little or no impact on the behaviour of most male students
- Relationships with peers and reference groups are critical
- Perceived negative associations amongst peers
- Negative (and often inaccurate) myths about procedures at clinics
- Perceived logistical problems act as cost/barrier

Limitations and Further Research

- Exploratory study: involved a small random sample of male undergraduates from one English university
- Extend research to other universities and young males from wider socio-economic backgrounds
- Recommend focussed studies to identify appropriate incentives, service design and branding/communications strategy to motivate young males to undertake regular Chlamydia screenings

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