

SEX PIGS

A ROUGH GUIDE TO DIRTY SEX

A NEW APPROACH TO HIV PREVENTION

ISSUES

Australian research has identified gay men who practice adventurous sex (fisting, group sex, drugs) as a priority group for HIV prevention. Sexually confident HIV positive gay men are highly represented in this subculture. Specifically, the challenge was to develop a prevention campaign that adapted to HIV positive men's sexual limits and included the way new understandings of risk, safety and health are incorporated in their sexual lives.

DESCRIPTION

SEX PIGS: Dark and dirty sex and managing your health which includes advertisements in the community media, postcards and booklet, draws on the practices and learning of sexually adventurous men, thereby sharing strategies to manage their health and the health of their partners.

This campaign highlights values and models of behaviour, and harm minimisation applied to condom and drug use. While condom use with casual partners of unknown status is a key message of this campaign, it also acknowledges a tendency of many HIV positive men to seek other positive men in casual encounters as a harm reduction strategy. Because negative and positive men share the same social and sexual spaces, campaign messages were designed to speak to both.

Campaign resources:

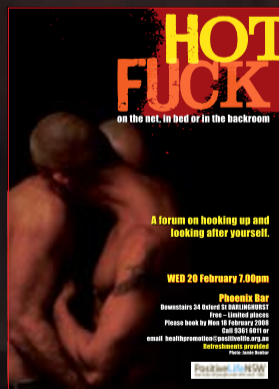
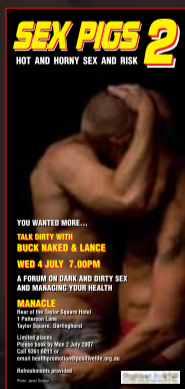
- offer strategies to prevent the transmission of HIV (this is primarily by promoting the use of condoms with partners of unknown or different HIV serostatus)
- challenge assumptions about the HIV status of unknown casual partners and enhance the skills and awareness of positive men who serosort
- acknowledge the role of the Internet in negotiating sex and building confidence around HIV and discussing status
- inform men about the importance of STI testing and strategies to prevent them (in particular syphilis)
- raise awareness of increased risk of Hepatitis C transmission in fisting (and ways to avoid transmission of Hepatitis C)
- increase awareness of PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis)
- raise awareness of the impact of drug use, particularly on decision making and risk taking
- offer some strategies to better manage health while using illicit drugs.



CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT

MESSAGES DRAW ON HOW GAY MEN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER ABOUT SEX

HIV positive and negative sexually adventurous men were invited to take part in campaign development using parts of the process they found personally meaningful and practical. These included community forums, focus and discussion groups, and semi-structured interviews.



As an approach to prevention it is important to create spaces where men can talk openly about sex and the risks they have taken. Dan (an interviewee) explains:

I've found there are social boundaries put on what's permitted in terms of talking about sex and risk. If we don't talk about it, it's difficult to deal with the issues. Dan

As Gerard says below, as well as learning about sex men also learn about an ethic of care:

Several times when we've been playing with people and they've gotten bloody, I tell them we need to stop and carry on with some other activity. And around the toys that we use for arse play, I always have lots of condoms on hand for hygiene, for them as well as for myself. Yeah, wash the toys thoroughly afterwards and make sure they're clean. Gerard

We need messages that are sophisticated and acknowledge gay men negotiate sex. I like the idea of having a dialogue ... encouraging communication and reflection about real experiences. James

'KEEPING IT REAL' – USING EVERYDAY LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY

For Dimitri (involved in campaign development), because the language used to describe 'sexual energy' is not neutral, 'sex pigs' voices need to be included:

We need to be involved in describing what it means for us. It's good to talk about "sex pigs" because it acknowledges sex drive and opens up discussions on social boundaries, drugs, moral codes and assumptions made about HIV status. Talking about "sex pigs" demystifies and de-stigmatises what we do.

Dimitri

For Greg and Gerard, seeing "real people" or knowing their experiences makes it more nuanced and grounded, both for positive and negative men. This is particularly significant in prevention work and "keeps it real":

I want to see a real situation with a real message about something that I'm about to do. Greg

[The campaign] should talk in the language that we speak in. It should talk about fucking, it should talk about cocks, fisting and arses, it should talk about being a sex pig- it should spell it out.

Gerard

CAMPAIGN BRANDING ENGAGES AND REPRODUCES THE 'SEX PIGS' CULTURE

Pornography is part of the everyday of 'sex pig' culture and reproduces ways of relating and learning (e.g. use of language).

'Sex pigs' participated in the photography session and shaped the images. While they were given a brief the way they related to each other and their disposition were theirs.



While we borrowed from pornography we also wanted to engage with an ethic of care and engagement. Looking over the 'sex pig's' shoulder you become part of the scene. You are positioned in an ethical relation to the imagery and narratives, and asked to be involved and consider your limits.

LESSONS LEARNED

SHAPING THEIR CULTURE 'SEX PIGS' REDEFINE WHAT HIV, HEALTH AND RISK MEAN FOR THEM

HIV prevention is not only a behavioural intervention, but is also a cultural practice, which engages and reproduces community norms, values and ethics. This work creates opportunities for sexually adventurous men ('sex pigs') to speak through their culture and helps to define the sexual and subjective spaces they share.

The conversational tone of SEX PIGS: DARK AND DIRTY SEX AND MANAGING YOUR HEALTH acknowledges the changing dynamics around boundaries and risk, and reproduces this through the use of personal narratives. Messages respect gay men's learning and knowledge, and ask them to consider how they share this knowledge, and to rethink their sexual practices.

By challenging a straightforward communication approach, we engage in a reflective communication that opens up possibilities in pleasure, learning and caring for self and others.

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