

Young Sudanese Queenslanders sexual health knowledge and behaviours may place them at risk - culturally informed sexuality education is needed.

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Background

- The Sudanese community was one of the largest new arrival groups in Australia over the previous 10 years^[1], however, little is known about their sexual health literacy and needs post resettlement. African refugee and migrant background communities are disproportionately represented in Australian HIV prevalence data^[2], thus there is a need to consider this group's sexual health a priority.

Aim

- Explore the sexual health knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of young Sudanese Queenslanders.
 - Griffith University HREC Protocol Number: NRS/02/09/HREC
- [#] Note: This study was conducted when Sudan and South Sudan emerged as separate sovereign states so the majority of participants may now self-identify as South Sudanese background.

Method

- Using a convergent parallel mixed methods design conducted in partnership with the target community, this study involved a convenience sample of 16-24 year old Sudanese Queenslanders (N = 229) completing an anonymous self-administered written survey.
- Descriptive, correlational, and MANOVA statistics were conducted

Results

- 91.3% were Christian, 79% born in Sudan, Mean age = 19.2 years (Table 1).
- Mean HIV knowledge score (M = 6.8, 12 item, Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$) was higher than mean STI knowledge score (M = 3.6, 11 item, Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$)
 - Knowledge significantly higher among females ($p < .001$).
- STI & HIV Knowledge was generally low, however, 61.1% had sought sexual health information, and length of time lived in Australia significantly improved both genders' knowledge levels ($p < .001$).
- 72.1% were confident talking about sex with partners, however, notably less were confident talking about sex with parents (27.9%).
- Sexual Risk Behaviour Score (SRBS) (25 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .9$, range 7 to 70, M = 27.91, SD = 14.1) suggested low levels of risk behaviour,
 - Males self-reported significantly higher SRBS ($p < .001$).
- There was evidence of protective health seeking behaviours: low alcohol use, discussing condoms/STI/pregnancy before sex and 31% had been tested for HIV.
- However among the sexually active ($n = 140$) there was generally low perceptions of STI risk, inconsistent condom use, low hormonal contraception use (9.3%) and evidence of risk behaviours and negative outcomes such as an STI diagnosis (3%), pregnancy (9%), and unwanted sex (33%) (Table 2 & 3).

Table 2 Self-reported sexual activity, alcohol and drugs use by gender (N = 229) (%)

Behaviour	Male	Female	Total
Sexually active	63.8	57.0	61.1
Perceived themselves to be at risk of STI	22.1	11.4	18.3
Had a HIV test	30.9	31.6	31.0
Drink Alcohol	26.8	27.8	27.1
Injected illicit drugs	3.4	3.8	3.5

Table 3 Patterns of sexual activity (n = 140) (%)

Behaviour	Male	Female	Total
Oral sex last 12 month	58.9	64.4	60.7
Vaginal sex last 12 months	62.2	79.9	67.9
Anal sex last 12 months	31.6	35.6	32.9
≥ 3 oral sex partners in last 12months	31.6	4.4	22.8
≥ 3 vaginal sex partners in last 12months	28.5	17.7	25.0
≥ 3 anal sex partners in last 12months	13.8	4.4	10.7
Always use condom	73.3	57.1	68.2
Condom used last sexual encounter (SE)	50.5	37.8	46.4
Drunk or high at last SE	7.3	8.9	9.7
Partner of Sudanese origin at last SE	28.4	53.3	36.4
Same sex partner at last SE	7.4	11.1	8.6
Reported they enjoyed last SE	53.7	44.4	50.7
Discussed condoms at last SE	55.8	68.9	60.0
Discussed avoiding pregnancy at last SE	34.7	62.2	43.6
Discussed avoiding HIV at last SE	35.8	55.6	42.1
Had sex leading to an STI diagnosis	1.1	7.1	3.1
Had sex leading to a pregnancy	2.2	22.7	9.0
Had an abortion	0.0	13.6	4.5
Experienced unwanted sex	34.4	28.9	33.1

Table 1: Sample Characteristics (N = 229) (%)

Ethnic tribal background	Dinka	38.0
[*] Other = Acholi, Ashanti, Azande, Baland, Bari, Chadian, Cholo, Kakwa, Kwalib, KuKu, Luo, Lova, Madi, Mali, Moru, Mundari, Nuer, Pojulu, Shillik	Nuba	10.9
	Other [*]	46.6
Time in a refugee Camp	Yes	44.5
	No	51.5
Main language spoken at home	English	9.6
[~] Other = Acholi, African, Bari, Kakuwa, Kuku, Lova, Neur, Madi, Nubian, Swahili and Zande.	Arabic	38.9
	Dinka	35.4
	Other [~]	14.4
Current institution of learning & employment	At secondary school	38.4
	At TAFE [#]	24.0
	At University	23.6
	Employed	7.9
	Unemployed & not studying	5.2

[#] Technical And Further Education

Note: % may not add to 100 because of missing data.

Conclusion & Implications for Practice

- Patterns of sexual behaviour among this predominately refugee background group are not dissimilar to those of other young Australians^[3].
- However, there was clear evidence of knowledge deficits and behaviours that place them at increased risk of negative sexual health outcome.
- Suggesting a strong need for culturally informed sexual health education and interventions that address these aspects early within the resettlement experience.

References

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