EXAMINING INTERACTIONS WITH ONLINE OUTREACH WORKERS FOR GAY, BISEXUAL AND OTHER MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN

Background As the Internet is increasingly becoming a platform for sexual health education, gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBM) are having greater interactions with online outreach workers. However, little is known about the content or their assessment of these interactions.

Methods Recruitment of GBM aged 14+ into the #iCruise study occurred across Ontario from 07/2017–01/2018 via socio-sexual websites/apps. Participants reported details about the interactions they had with online outreach workers including what health topics were discussed and gave an assessment of the interaction via Likert scale questions.

Results A total of 910 GBM who completed baseline cross-sectional data collection were eligible for this analysis. Half of participants (49%) reported being under age 30, 62% White, 65% gay-identified, 12% HIV-positive, 44% with some university education, and 12% living in rural areas. Among the sample, nearly 10% (9.7%, n=88/910) reported having ever interacted with an online outreach worker: of these, 37 (42%) reported one interaction, 38 (43%) reported 2–5 interactions, and 8 (9%) reported 6+ interactions; 5 (6%) unsure. Healthy sex (34%) and HIV/STI testing (e.g., where to get tested) were the most popular topics discussed, followed by HIV/STI prevention (27%), pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) (19%), HIV sexually transmitted infection (STI) transmission risk (17%), HIV/STI treatment and care (13%), condoms (11%) and lube (11%). When rating the outreach interaction, GBM reported: it was easy to understand (92%), gay/bisexual friendly (88%), relevant to gay/bisexual guys (87%), ‘didn’t make me feel bad about myself’ (79%), applicable (72%), and the interaction had fully answered their question (74%). Over half of the participants reported the information was transgend-er friendly (56%) and relevant to trans guys (52%).

Conclusion A significant minority of GBM had interactions with online outreach that covered a range of health topics. These interactions were generally very positive and rated understandable, applicable, and inclusive.

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