

New Technologies New Responses Conference May 18-21-2004

PLWHA Victoria Inc.

Speakers Bureau

Victorian AIDS Council/Gay Men's

Health Centre

Health Promotion Team



Would I have sex with a Positive man?

Combining +/- in Peer Education
A Victorian perspective

Authors and Presenters

- Max Niggli - Speakers Bureau Co-ordinator
- Asvin Phorugngam - Health Educator

Presentation order

- Issues
- Programs mission statements
- Project rationale
- Project aims
- Processes/Implementation

Continue

Presentation order

- Peer Education workshops overview
- Topics cover by speakers
- Preliminary findings
- Conclusion

The issues that we propose to look at

- Where do PLWHA's sit in the roles of HIV Prevention and Peer Education post the rises in HIV transmissions with the view to challenging "pozphobia" amongst negative gay men and MSM?
- We will present preliminary data in this paper.

Speaker Bureau Mission Statement

To empower HIV positive Victorians to educate the wider community about HIV/AIDS. Through public speaking and sharing their experiences of living with the virus, positive people break down barriers and reduce stigmatisation and misinformation about HIV/AIDS.

Peer Education workshop aims

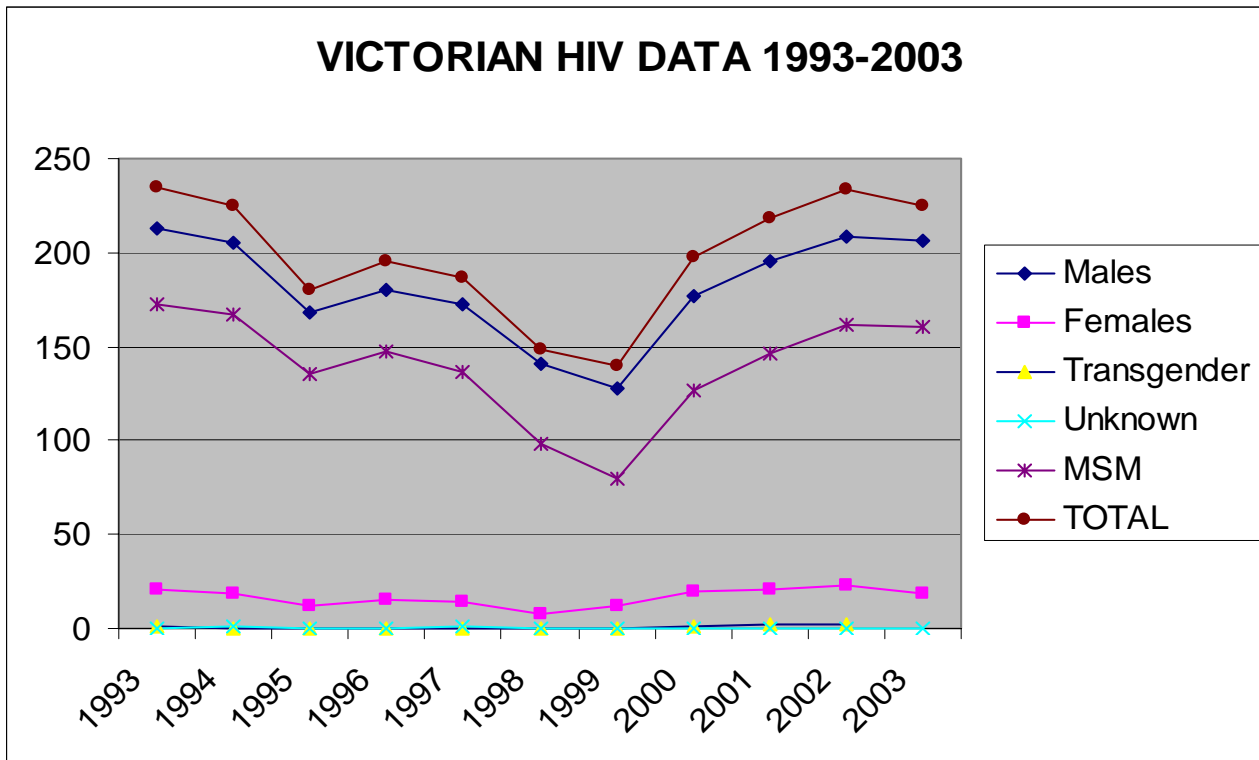
To reduce and minimise the impact of HIV / AIDS on the lives of men who identify as being gay or have sex with other men. A further aim is to ensure that these men particularly those who due to their age, socioeconomic background or lifestyle are harder to reach have ongoing access to credible and current information about safe sex practices using methods that promote, motivate and sustain safe sex behaviours.

(Adapted from Youth Program Team, VAC/GMHC)

Project rationale

- Rises in HIV infection in Victoria
- Seroconversions in regular relationships
- HIV positive gay men's participation in HIV prevention education
- A gap in Peer Ed workshops
- Increase the visibility of HIV + men
- Challenge and reduce the POZ and NEG divide and pozphobia
- Increase capacity of Peer Ed workshop facilitators to discuss stigma and discrimination against Pos people
- The combining of PLWHA Vic. and VAC/GMHC in Peer education and prevention workshops
- Anecdotal evidence that neg men claim that they don't know HIV POZ men

Consecutive rises in Victorian HIV infections 93-03



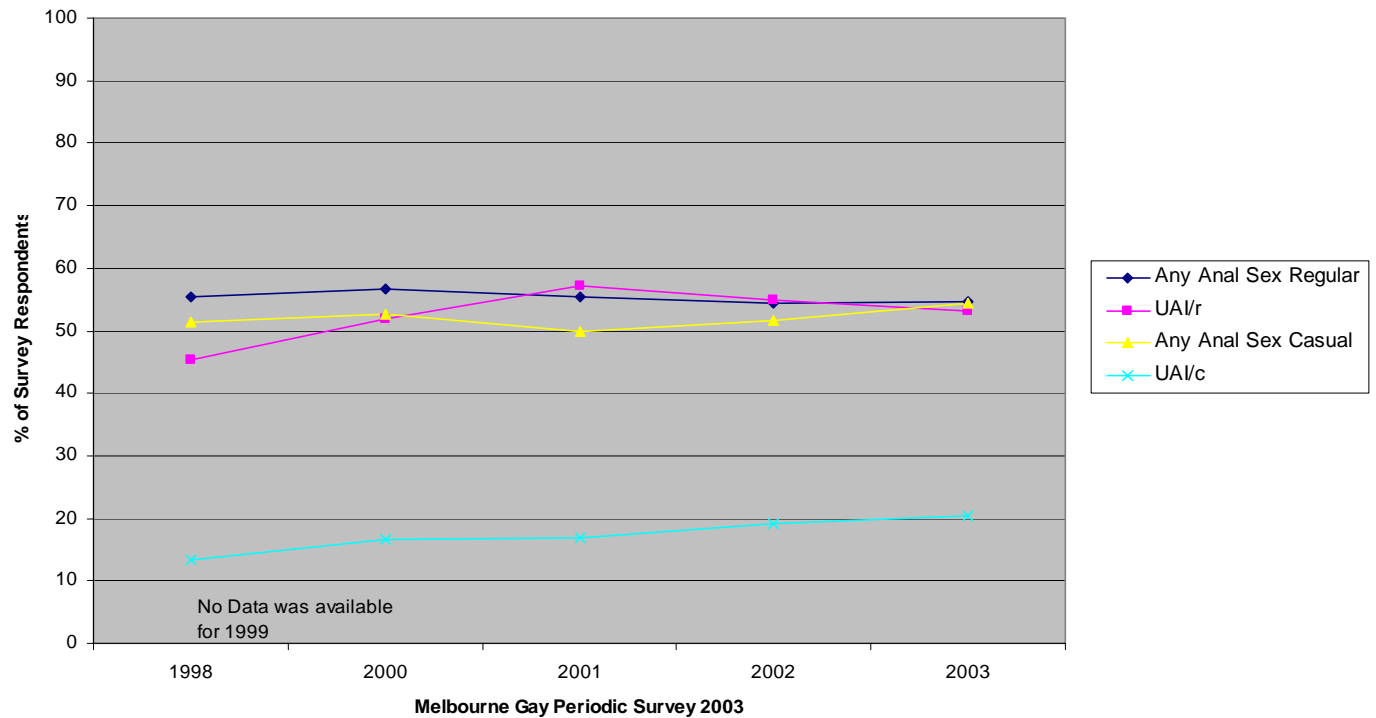
Why focus on relationship component of the workshops?

“Risk of seroconversion was slightly more likely for those in regular relationship... and for those in regular relationships the risk associated with the beginnings or early months of relationships”

(**Seroconversion in context**, S. Kppax, S. Slavin, J. Ellard, O. Kendry, J. Richters, A. Grulich & J. Kaldor)

Anal sex and UAI

Anal Sex and UAI



What we hope workshop participants will learn

- Awareness of HIV/AIDS
- Awareness of PLWHA's
- Relationships -concordant and dis-concordant
- Negotiated safety and risk reduction strategies with casual and regular partners
- Reduce fear and misconception of PLWHA's
- PEP (Post exposure Prophylaxis)
- Safe and informal space for pos and neg men to interact in a meaningful way

What do speakers get out of giving talks?

- Empowerment
- Managing the virus
- Reduction in isolation
- Overcome moral judgements
- Increased confidence/skills
- Improve self esteem/respect
- Money
- Education for self and others
- Reduced transmission of virus
- Reduce discrimination/stigma/myths
- Provide a human face of HIV/AIDS to make it real

Process/implementation

- Initial idea was discussed
- Pilot project - GAP
- Selected appropriate speakers to match different workshops and target groups
- Evaluated pilot project
- Build current facilitators and speakers' capacity
- Implementation of idea
- Evaluated idea's effectiveness and impact
- Speakers sponsorship by Abbott Australasia

Peer education workshops and structures

Four workshops:

- Young and Gay
- Momentum
- Relationships
- Gay Asian Proud

Information/topics the speakers' include in their presentations

- Self introduction/history
- Issues positive men faced
- Relationship and sex with men
- Types of relationships
- Risk reduction strategy
- Negotiated sex with regular and casual relationships
- Disclosure and discrimination
- Sex with sero-concordant and sero-discordant men
- P.E.P.

Five major benefits from the project

One...

Inter-agency collaboration between PLWHA
and VAC/GMHC

Five major benefits from the project

Two...

Benefits gained by workshop participants

“The first time I have heard people with positive status speak about how being (HIV) positive has impacted their lives and how they interact with other people”.

(Relationships participant)

Continue

Five major benefits from the project

Two...

Benefits gained by workshop participants

“Really poignant stories ‘real’ people with normal feelings, not the ‘outsiders’. Definitely took away my feelings of fear”. (Relationships participant)

“They opened my mind to people living with it (HIV) and how they deal with day to day life”.
(Momentum participant)

Continue

Five major benefits from the project.

Two...

Benefits gained by workshop participants

“We had A and B join our group and it just blew me away... hearing their stories of coming to terms with being HIV + in addition to coming out reinforced how lucky I’ve been so far” (Young & Gay participants)

Five major benefits from the project

Three...

Benefits gained by speakers

“I was very surprised to meet so many gay men who had little or no experience of HIV/AIDS”

“...I would regard this speech as rewarding and beneficial to my own personal development whilst forcing me to confront scenario’s previously not considered...”

Continue

Five major benefits from the project

Three...

Benefits gained by speakers

“...Overall, I personally felt that this workshop provoked, questioned and dealt with many important issues faced by the HIV positive community and also encouraged an openness and willingness to learn rarely experienced as a speaker...”

Five major benefits from the project

Four...

Benefits gained by volunteer peer facilitators

“The group was mesmerised with what they guys (speakers) had to say and their experiences in the first 24 hours, how their outlook changed on relationships (whether they wanted a partner of the same status)... Positive feedback was received at the end of the night and also the following week”.

(Relationship facilitator)

Continue

Five major benefits from the project

Four...

Benefits gained by volunteer peer facilitators

“I thought that the session was terrific. The two speakers presented two different perspectives on their situations. The group was absolutely spellbound – riveted to the speaker... I’m sure the group have all come away with something from this session. At the end of the evening, and again the following week, we received positive feedback from group members on the session”. (Relationship facilitator)

Continue

Five major benefits from the project.

Four...

Benefits gained by volunteer peer facilitators

“I liked the way speakers told their personal stories without shame and guilt. The participants and myself gained a new insight into the life of PLWHA’s. By portraying positive and energetic HIV + people, negative stigma associated with PLWHA was challenged”. (Young & Gay facilitator)

Five major benefits from the project.

Five...

Trained volunteer peer educators and HIV positive speakers have a major role to play in HIV prevention education.

Conclusion

- Inclusion of HIV Positive speakers into Peer Education workshops has had extremely successful outcomes to date.
- It has increased knowledge and awareness of the realities of HIV transmissions and living with HIV/AIDS.

Continue

Conclusion

- It has provided workshop participants with a safe forum to discuss issues such as sero-concordant and disconcordant sex in casual and regular relationships, safe sex negotiation and unprotected anal intercourse thereby breaking down barriers of fear, ignorance and discrimination against PLWHA's.

Would I have sex with a positive man?

Combining +/- in Peer Education
A Victorian perspective

Authors and Presenters

- Max Niggli. Speakers Bureau - Co-ordinator
- Asvin Phorugngam - Health Educator