

'It's not all cocks and arses' – AGM 15TH Nov 2007

The process of designing or redesigning a resource on sexually transmitted infections is always a challenge and can take an inordinate amount of time from the initial discussion to the final product. A main concern apart from accuracy is that the design is accessible and of course appealing enough for our target audience to pick up, read at their leisure or stuff into the pocket of their jeans and take home.

The purpose of any sexual health resource is to inform, and act as a guide equipping people to make their own informed choices about the sex they have and answer some of the questions they may have regarding their sexual health and well being.

Based on current epidemiology the most prevalent of the sexually transmitted infections amongst men who have sex with men within the Yorkshire MESMAC regions and nationally include:

- Gonorrhoea (also know as 'The Clap')
- Non-Specific Urethritis (NSU)
- Syphilis
- Hepatitis B
- HIV

With these STI's on the increase we decided that Yorkshire MESMAC would concentrate on these specific infections when producing the new resources.

➡ Style

The resources which Yorkshire MESMAC have in the past used to great effect have now come of age and needed updating. The style has gone from one of a medical view of the Infections using microscopic images of the infections themselves to a more up to date use of sexualised imagery. There are copies of the images on the screen behind us.

Imagery

One of the most difficult challenges faced by those involved in the design has been what imagery accurately portrays the diversity of the target group. We are very aware that the images need to be appropriate and engaging. We therefore chose a cross section of ages and ethnicities, using a simple range of colours to define the individual resources. The HIV leaflet has a combination of these images to show that HIV does not discriminate. This of course applies to all of the other STi's as well, but makes a powerful point when discussing HIV.

Language

Its not only the images that have to be appealing to the target groups when designing a resource, we have to consider the language used when we come to write and edit the information to be included, ensuring that the messages are clear and to the point. We are very aware that for many of our service users english may not be their first language and that some people have difficulty in reading printed materials. We want to make sure they can access the information contained in the resource. Some of the information however is of a complex medical nature; we look at the nature of transmission, terminology and treatments, but have, where possible, tried to keep this to a minimum.

Content

With regard to the content, we have updated the language and generally made the resources that bit easier to read and understand with a clear emphasis on informative and succinct information. The resources have also been designed with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Compliance in mind.

Accuracy

As always when compiling the information required for any new resource within the Yorkshire MESMAC group of services we must be aware of any information changes where diagnosis and treatments are concerned.

In the period since the previous resources were launched changes in the way STi's are diagnosed and developments in treatment therapies especially where HIV is concerned with rapid HIV testing now available to service users, printed materials rapidly date.

➡ Accessibility

For any resource to be accessible it has to be available in a number of formats, as with the development and publication of a new resource it is impossible to cover all of eventualities, here at Yorkshire MESMAC we not only have printed copies of the new STI guides, we also have PDF and some available as an audio version on the Yorkshire MESMAC website, PDF versions are also available for a number of other resources including back copies of MESMAG.

➡ The Result

Having decided upon the design, layout and imagery we utilised the expertise of the staff team discussing the most relevant STI's to include, the style of wording to be used and where we expect the resources to be placed, i.e. Doctors surgeries, schools and other organisations. This then led to a discussion on the actual images and how sexualised they could be, do we use pictures of cocks and arses on the covers or go for a more generic approach with images that would be sexy but would not offend.

We feel we have come up with a group of resources that will appeal to a broad range of our service users and that will become synonymous with the Yorkshire MESMAC group of services.

In the end we played safe and sexy without the cocks and arses!

There are copies of the new resources at the Leeds stand.