

SEXUAL HEALTH UPDATE

10 September 2004

Kia ora tatou katoa, Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Kia orana, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Ni sa bula, Taloha ni and greetings. Welcome to the first issue of *Sexual Health Update* - the email newsletter for the upcoming sexual health campaign. The campaign will encourage sexually active young people to protect themselves by using a condom.

Sexual Health Update will report on the progress of the campaign and seek feedback and comments. We also hope that it will be used to strengthen sexual health networks and enable the sector to share information and ideas. The newsletter will be circulated every six weeks - watch out for the next issue in mid-October.

The involvement of the sexual health sector is crucial in the development of the campaign, and a big thank you to all those who have been involved so far. We will continue to work closely with the sector.

For this campaign to work at a national, regional and local level it must meet the needs of those who work in the sexual health area. We don't want the campaign to be yet another thing you have to deal with in your busy day. Rather, campaign messages need to enhance your existing work, and make it easier for you to promote your key messages and to address key sexual health issues. Therefore, we will be working closely with the sector during the campaign development period to discuss how the campaign will best work for you.

Send feedback on the campaign, or contributions to this newsletter, to me on 09 580 9076, sally_hughes@moh.govt.nz

Kia ora and kind regards

Sally Hughes
Project Manager, Sexual Health Campaign
Ministry of Health

Key dates

The campaign television commercials will go to air in the week beginning 21st November 2004. Supporting media such as radio and print advertising will start around the same time. The campaign will run until the end of February 2005.

Focusing on the issues

It will be news to no one in the sexual health sector that New Zealand's rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are increasing - particularly chlamydia and gonorrhoea.

Here are some of the facts:

- there has been no major public health campaign about the risk of HIV/AIDS and STIs for over a decade
- in that time the rates of HIV and STIs have been increasing, despite the good work of those in the sexual health sector
- untreated, STIs can increase the risk of infertility, cancer and other chronic diseases
- rangatahi Māori and Pacific youth continue to experience significantly higher rates of chlamydia and gonorrhoea than Europeans/Pakeha
- the STIs most frequently diagnosed in New Zealand are chlamydia, genital warts, non-specific urethritis (NSU) in males, genital herpes and gonorrhoea
- genital chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed STI at sexual health clinics
- the number of confirmed cases of chlamydia presenting at sexual health clinics has risen by more than 100 percent from 1995 to 2000
- chlamydia most commonly affects those aged 15 to 24
- in 2003, the incidence of chlamydia in New Zealand was over four times higher than in Australia
- the number of people diagnosed with gonorrhoea at sexual health clinics has been increasing since 1996
- in 2000, there were 492 confirmed cases of gonorrhoea, an increase of nearly 30 percent from the previous year
- rates of HIV/AIDS in New Zealand fluctuate. There was an increase in people newly diagnosed with HIV in 2002.

What does all this mean, and what can we do about it?

In 2003 the Minister of Health, Hon Annette King, requested that the Ministry of Health run a safer sex public health campaign as part of the Government's sexual and reproductive health strategy. The aim of the campaign would be to address the rising STI rates among our young people. The current campaign is being developed as a result of that request.

The campaign aim is to increase safer sex in order to reduce the incidence of STIs in 15-19 year old New Zealanders, particularly rangatahi Māori and Pacific youth.

Parents and caregivers will also be a focus - it is important that they are aware of our rising STI rates and the impact this could have on their children.

It's all about supporting the choices made by teens - whether that is to have sex, or to wait. Those who make the choice to have sex need protection if they are to be safe from STIs.

Campaign will use a variety of media

Young people watch, listen to and interact with a huge variety of media. The campaign will be spread across these media to ensure that the largest possible number of 15 to 19 year olds are exposed to the campaign messages. This will mean using a mixture of TV, cinema, radio, outdoor advertising (which may include large posters in bus stops, billboards, chalk drawings on footpaths, poster paste ups), magazines, texting and print resources.

More detailed information will also be promoted via a campaign website for young people, which will link to other relevant sites. Articles in youth magazines will encourage the use of condoms and events will also be used to further promote the message, and to distribute more detailed information and sample condoms.

Youth events will be important to this campaign. We will have a presence at key events that are focused on the 15-19 year age group, and in particular events that focus on rangatahi and Pacific youth audiences. We will be giving away informative brochures, condoms and lube.

A list of events at which it would be appropriate for campaign messages to be promoted is currently being developed. We welcome your suggestions of events that you know of in your area.

What will the campaign look like? **We don't know yet!**

Ideas for the commercials and other media are currently being developed and will soon be researched with groups of young people for their comment and feedback. The concept that young people relate to best, and that delivers the clearest message about the need to use condoms, will then be developed into television commercials.

Input from the sexual health sector

The campaign is being developed with ongoing support and advice from a working group made up of key organisations with an interest in sexual health. Working group members include representatives from the Family Planning Association, the NZ AIDS Foundation, Te Puawai Tapu, the NZ Prostitutes Collective, sexual health physicians, district health boards and the Ministry of Health. A wider group of sexual health workers and providers also provided vital input and direction at a campaign meeting held in July.

Development of the campaign

Graham Strategic Ltd (GSL) is assisting with development of the campaign. GSL is an advertising and communications company focusing on social marketing. Social marketing aims to change behaviour, as well as increasing understanding and changing attitudes. Other GSL clients include Health Sponsorship Council (Smokefree, Auahi Kore, SunSmart), The Quit Group, Ministry of Health (BreastScreen Aotearoa), Cancer Society of NZ and Ministry of Education (Te Mana).

Working with the sector

Wider communication around the campaign is being managed by Damiane Rikihana and Trevor Shailer (specialising in Māori communications), Sandra Kailahi (specialising in Pacific communications) and Liz Price (general communications). Damiane, Trevor, Sandra and Liz are part of the Graham Strategic team. They will prepare each issue of *Sexual Health Update*. Where possible, they would love to attend regional meetings to discuss the campaign. In particular, they would like feedback on how the campaign can work at a regional and local level and advice on the most appropriate regional and local messages and resources.

We are particularly keen to find out whether informative brochures are needed in your area and how we can together find ways to distribute these to all areas, and in particular, to those areas with the greatest need.

Once the campaign is underway, Damiane, Trevor, Sandra and Liz will be seeking stories and pictures of how campaign messages are being used in your area.
