

STIs are not just a concern for the young

September 8 2015, by Kate Bourne

A new study, involving the University of Adelaide, has found men over 60 are less likely than younger men to get tested for HIV.

This follows other studies from around the world showing rates of sexually transmissible infections (STIs), including HIV, are increasing in the older population.

Dr Carole Khaw, from the University of Adelaide's School of Medicine and Clinic 275, Infectious Diseases Unit at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, lead a team who conducted a retrospective study involving more than 29,000 [men](#) (of which 689 were over 60 years of age) who visited a [sexual health](#) clinic over a 13-year period.

The paper was recently published in the journal *Sexual Health*.

"STIs have been considered primarily to be a health concern for young people because incidences are higher and the health consequences, including implications for fertility, are more pronounced in the younger population. However, the potential for increased STI diagnoses in [older adults](#) exist due to ongoing sexual activity," says Dr Khaw.

"This study found that [older men](#) (who have sex with men and who have sex with women) were less likely to have had an HIV test in a 12-month period compared to [younger men](#). This is consistent with other studies indicating older adults are less likely to be tested for HIV as [younger adults](#)," she says.

Dr Khaw says that there is a need for greater sexual health awareness amongst older adults.

"Overall, the findings of this study suggest older men may be less conscious of their sexual health than the younger population," says Dr Khaw. "They are also less likely to get testing for STIs, including HIV, resulting in later presentations to health clinics and perhaps more complications."

"Sexually active older adults, particularly those not in a monogamous relationship, are exposed to the same sexual health risks as younger adults," she says. "If older adults do not consider their sexual health, there is a great risk of STIs dramatically increasing in this age group."

"There is potential for reducing HIV and other STI transmissions amongst older sexually active adults by increasing testing rates in this age group."

"The older population should be encouraged, and supported, to have more regular STI health checks," she says.

Provided by University of Adelaide

Citation: STIs are not just a concern for the young (2015, September 8) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-09-stis-young.html>

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