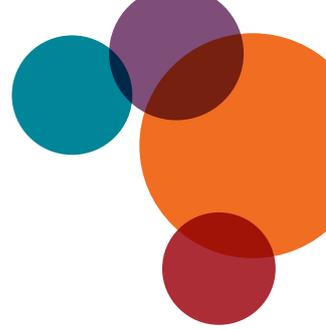




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Reproductive & Sexual Health
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MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 1 July 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Family Planning Victoria releases new sexual health resource for international students

Family Planning Victoria has launched a new sexual and reproductive health resource in a bid to overcome the “social and structural” barriers facing international students in Australia.

Dating in Australia: Stories from International Students, has been developed for international students at Victorian universities, TAFEs and private colleges, primarily for students from China and India. The resource consists of a comprehensive online sexual health education course, accompanied by five friendly, light-hearted, and informative videos discussing: pregnancy, contraception, and abortion; STIs and sexual health; dating; healthy relationships; and consent.

The project, funded by Study Melbourne’s International Student Welfare Program, aims to benefit students who have limited reproductive and sexual health knowledge and face challenges navigating the Australian healthcare system. Created by FPV’s Schools & Community Education team with research and production of the video series led by Jenny Walsh and the production of the online learning module by Bonnie Lee.

“What we heard from students through focus groups and individual interviews was that the main challenges to sexual health are both structural and social,” Ms Walsh said.

“One major barrier is that most international students’ health insurance policies may not cover the contraceptive pill, pregnancy care or abortion in the first year after arrival.

“Some other issues are not knowing general practitioners (GPs) could deliver sexual health care, and fear of disclosure about their visit to their families,” she said.

Research into international students in Australia show there is a 20 per cent increase in sexual activity and engaging in sexual behaviours for the first time since arriving in the country.¹

Areas of sexual health concern for heterosexual students include reported high rates of later term abortions; STI infections and low rates of asymptomatic screening; and low knowledge of sexual negotiation and healthy relationships.²

For same sex attracted students, the issues were focused on vulnerability to unwanted sex and HIV/STI infection caused by lack of skills and confidence around sexual negotiation.²

Family Planning Victoria CEO Claire Vissenga said it was vital that international students in Australia were supported and empowered to take charge of their sexual health.

“International students in Australia are often left in vulnerable positions through lack of suitable sexual and reproductive health information, high costs, and stigma,” Ms Vissenga said.

“Our hope is that ***Dating in Australia: Stories from International Students*** is a resource that will inform and engage students, as well as act as a conversation and education tool for universities, TAFEs, colleges and community health organisations.”

Family Planning Victoria welcomes enquiries from universities, TAFEs and colleges who would like to add **Dating in Australia: Stories from International Students** to their learning management systems. The resource is also available at www.fpv.org.au

Family Planning Victoria would like to thank Study Melbourne, Swinburne University, Women's Health in the North and 1800 My Options.

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References:

1. Martin et al (2019) Intimate attitudes, practices and knowledges: Chinese-speaking international students in Australia
2. Reeders, D. (2012) Responding to diversity: meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of international students. MSHS