The Internet is nothing if not an efficient tool for finding sex partners quickly. A 2006 paper reported that 40% of men who have sex with men used the Internet to find sex partners. A decline in this proportion since then seems unlikely.

On a recent day in Oregon at 10 a.m., one of the Multnomah County Sexually Transmitted Disease staff surveyed popular Web sites for arranging same-sex trysts and found...

- 193 men online live at manhunt.net
- 124 men online live at adam4adam.com
- 94 postings at craigslist from men seeking male partners
- 91 people online live at gay.com
- 1,000 postings for men seeking male partners in Oregon.

Perhaps you won’t be surprised to learn that, on average, partners met via the Internet are more likely than those met via traditional means to be HIV-positive, and that unprotected anal intercourse is more common among men who seek sex partners online than among those who don’t. It is difficult to unravel epidemiologically whether the Internet is simply a tool for those people who would otherwise take more risks than others, or actually the cause of an increase in risky sex. This issue of CD Summary explores the challenges and the opportunities of the Internet for control and prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

A SNAPSHOT OF CURRENT WEB PREVENTION EFFORTS

More than a year ago, the Sexual Health for Men Coalition, a Portland-area interagency workgroup dedicated to addressing sexual health issues among men, surveyed five local agencies involved in HIV prevention activities about their use of the Internet for prevention. These included two local public health departments, two community-based organizations and an academic institution. Common uses of Web-oriented strategies among respondents included the following:

- Purchase of banner ads on gay men’s Web sites;
- Profiles on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace;
- Posts about testing and treatment services on common sites for finding sex partners;
- Establishment of profiles by outreach workers on popular gay men’s Web sites to ‘chat’ live with users about HIV prevention, testing, treatment;
- Establishment and maintenance of Web sites dedicated to HIV prevention;
- Promotion through links or advertising on community and public health oriented Web sites; and

WEB SAVVINESS TEST

Match the social networking site logo to the clue. (You will find the answers at the bottom of the page.)

1. This social networking site has to face up to the thought that it might be losing its “edge” due to recent influx of parents and grandparents, and mind-numbing status updates from someone who knew your brother in high school.

2. Uses “tag clouds” to link images of most popular subjects.


4. Limits “tweets” to 140 characters.

5. Allows users to notify sex partners (anonymously if they prefer) of one’s recent sexually transmitted disease diagnosis. Points partners to local sources for testing and treatment. Used by nine U.S. cities, including (Yay!) Portland.

6. Facilitates same-sex liaisons. Started as telephone dating service. Includes enough profiles to date four million guys without seeing the same one twice.

7. This one is really simple—a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works.

Answers: 1) C; 2) A; 3) E; 4) F; 5) B; 6) D; 7) G
If you need this material in an alternate format, call us at 971-673-1111.

If you would prefer to have your CD Summary delivered by e-mail, zap your request to cd.summary@state.or.us. Please include your full name and mailing address (not just your e-mail address), so that we can purge you from our print mailing list, thereby saving trees, taxpayer dollars, postal worker injuries, etc.

March 16, 2010
Vol. 59, No. 06

WEB PREVENTION METRICS

The Cascade AIDS Project runs a site, supported by public health, for HIV prevention. The Oregon AIDS/STD Hotline (www.oregonaidshotline.com; box) gets about 310 visits a month from 160 unique visitors who each view slightly more than two different pages per visit. The home page accounts for about 50% of page views. Two pages offering general information about HIV (transmission, interpreting test results, medical care) and links to outside HIV resources attract more than 10% of page views, and another 5% are to the page dedicated to HIV testing. However, the bounce rate is 57%, meaning that most visitors don’t navigate beyond the welcome page. How about “traffic sources”? All but four of 765 visits from Oregon users came from locations in and around the Portland and Salem metropolitan areas.

BECAUSE IT’S THERE

Now you know the extent to which sex is purveyed in the internet bazaar. To prevent sexually transmitted disease, public health, despite its current financial and technological disadvantage, will follow George Mallory and go to the Internet...because it’s there.

REFERENCES


† Bounce rate: the proportion of initial visits to a site that result in only a single page view. High numbers are bad, low numbers good. The lower the bounce rate, the greater the number of visitors that stick around and continue to other pages on your site. Twenty percent is great, <35% is pretty good; >50%: get a new webmeister.
‡ The source of a Web site visit. One can arrive at a site directly by typing the site’s uniform resource locator, or URL, into the browser address line, via referral from another site by clicking an embedded link, and via a search engine by typing one or more terms indexed to that site into the search engine.