



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW HIV TESTING INITIATIVE TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR CHINESE-SPEAKING GAY MEN TO TEST OFTEN

NSW's leading HIV prevention organisation ACON, in partnership with Sydney Sexual Health Centre, is now offering its popular rapid HIV testing service a[TEST] in Mandarin to provide Chinese-speaking gay men and men who have sex with men (MSM) easier access to sexual health screenings and information.

The new a[TEST] Chinese Clinic will operate at a[TEST] Surry Hills every Thursday from 3pm – 6.30pm. Mandarin-speaking community peers and sexual health nurses will be available to see clients and the computer assisted self-interviews are translated in simplified Chinese language. As with all a[TEST] clinics, the service is free and confidential. No Medicare card is required.

Acting ACON CEO Karen Price said providing tailored and culturally-specific services is vital in ongoing efforts to reduce HIV transmissions in NSW.

“Recent data from NSW Health shows that new HIV notifications continue to fall, particularly among Australian-born gay men and MSM, but we are not seeing this decline across all populations with the majority of those newly diagnosed born overseas, including people born in Asia,” Price said. “Moreover, a number of overseas-born gay men diagnosed with HIV had late or advance stage infection, further highlighting the importance of regular testing.

“There are various reasons why people don't test for HIV, such as fear of a positive result or not believing they are at risk. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may also encounter language and cultural barriers. Being able to speak freely in healthcare settings is important and we hope by offering this clinic, people can ask questions and have a good conversation about their sexual health,” Price said.

“Our a[TEST] facilities are some of the most popular HIV and sexual health testing services in NSW,” Price added. “They are peer-led, which means they are staffed by gay men in safe, inclusive and nonjudgmental community-based settings. We see lots of return visitors as we know clients appreciate the high quality, easy and convenient service we offer with our partners.”

The a[TEST] Chinese Clinic is operated in partnership with Sydney Sexual Health Centre (SSHHC), who are also the clinical partner for both a[TEST] Surry Hills and a[TEST] Oxford St in Darlinghurst.

Dr Anna McNulty, Director SSHC, said: “Co-designing this new service with ACON aimed at reducing barriers to testing for Chinese gay men has been a great opportunity to build on the success of the a[TEST] service”.

“Enhancing our existing resources such the option for clients to register and answer personal and confidential sexual health questions via CASI – computer assisted self-interview – in a language other than English, and by utilising the bilingual skills of both nurses and peers to ensure culturally appropriate care, we hope to see an increase in numbers of Asian gay men testing in particular those who have never tested before,” McNulty said.

The expansion of a[TEST] in Chinese is among a range of strategies implemented by ACON to support the health and wellbeing of Asian gay men. ACON continues to publish resources in a range of languages, and run peer education workshops, community forums, social groups and digital platforms for Asian gay men and MSM.

As well as Surry Hills, a[TEST] operates in Darlinghurst, Kings Cross and Newtown. Since its launch in 2013, a[TEST] has grown to become one of the largest testing services in NSW. Last year, around 8,500 rapid HIV tests were administered across the a[TEST] network.

“Testing is key to reducing HIV transmission in NSW because if gay men don't know their HIV status, they can't improve their health or take action to prevent potential transmissions,” Price added. “We encourage all gay men and MSM, including Chinese-speaking guys, to book a test or drop into our a[TEST] sites. With the addition of our new a[TEST] Chinese Clinic, it's never been easier to get test and take control of your health.”

The a[TEST] Chinese Clinic: Every Thursday 3pm-6.30pm, 414 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills. Book and more information at: endinghiv.org.au

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