Goldfields SHAK Facebook—a new approach to providing sexual health advice

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Background

The Western Australia (WA) Goldfields is located in the south eastern corner of Western Australia and is the largest Region in WA. The area is more than three times the size of Victoria and covers almost a third of WA’s total land mass. In 2012 The WA–Goldfields region had an estimated population of 61,391; with a population projected growth of 7% between 2010 and 2016. The overall Aboriginal population percentage of the WA Goldfields in 2010 was 12%; relative to the average of 3% in Western Australia. There are 17 Aboriginal communities within the WA–Goldfields.

In February 2011, Claire Mutton, the WA Goldfields Sexual Health Coordinator at the time proposed the idea of utilising current social media networks for promotion of sexual health. The concept of using social media and the establishment of a Sexual Health Facebook page was born in response to increasing rates of Chlamydia in the Goldfields.

Chlamydia is the most commonly notified sexually transmitted infection (STI) in Western Australia, is endemic in the WA–Goldfields with males and females aged 15 to 24 years found to have the highest rates. During 2010 84% of chlamydia notifications occurred in people aged under 30 years. There was a more than three-fold increase of notifications of chlamydia to the WA Department of Health between 2001 and 2010, the number of chlamydia infections reported to the DoH. There were 2,707 notifications in 2001 compared to 10,249 in 2010; these figures also show that the 2010 chlamydia notifications were 15% greater than in 2009.

It was felt that a Facebook targeting people in the 15 to 30 year age group could increase access to a range of information and general advice on maintaining and improving sexual health. Facebook could potentially be the platform for young people to ask specific questions and receive appropriate answers from skilled staff and ensure their anonymity. All going well, the flow on effect from this; would be an increased number of young people practising safe sex and having regular sexual health checks.

Traditional methods of health education have limited success with this difficult to reach target group. But young adults in this age-group are mostly very IT Savvy—a talent worth utilising. The WACHS–Goldfields Public Health team have successfully established the first Facebook page in use within WA Department of Health (breaking new ground for others to follow).

Aim

The aim of the Facebook page was to not only increase communication on sexual health matters with the target group of people aged 15–30 years; but also to encourage an increase in the uptake of current services available within the region. It was hoped that by improving the knowledge of sexual health of the target group, this would lead to a reduction in the rates of chlamydia.

Historically regional areas have a high rate of staff turnover which can result in a lack of continuity with program development and implementation. The Facebook page would help to reduce the chance of this occurring as once the initial set up stage was completed; the time required for maintenance is significantly less and is coordinated by the Sexual Health Coordinator with assistance from the Senior Public Health Nurse, the Public Health Physician and the Aboriginal Sexual Health Promotion Officers.

Background research

Current forms of social media were reviewed; with the conclusion being that social media can be an effective tool in reaching the target audience. A survey of 65 local youth was conducted to see if this
conclusion could be applied to the local youth. The results showed 85% of those surveyed used Facebook on a daily basis; and furthermore 82% would use Facebook to access information on sexual health. The survey was conducted during youth week (16 April – 20 April 2011) at the Cement Youth Event in Kalgoorlie; results are outlined in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1  Current Facebook user information results from survey at Cement youth event April 2011 (n = 65)

![Figure 1](image1.png)

Figure 2  Specific information to a Kalgoorlie based Facebook page; results from survey at Cement youth event April 2011 (n = 65)

![Figure 2](image2.png)

The conclusion was drawn that the benefits of a local Facebook page promoting sexual health warranted the time and effort required to implement the first ever WA Department of Health Facebook page.
Establishment of the Facebook page

A business case and social media plan was submitted early 2011 and ‘Goldfields SHAK’ was launched February 2012. This innovative initiative has been highly successful. Continuity is important; staff turnover can be a challenge within the Region and Facebook allowed for this.

Initial set-up of the Facebook page

Facebook allows for different forms of access, the Goldfields SHAK page was set up as a ‘place’. This approach was taken for privacy reasons. If the page was set up as a ‘person’; then the general population news feed would be able to be viewed on the Goldfields SHAK page. Having the Goldfields SHAK set up as a ‘place’ allows the administrator of the page to see who joins (referred to as ‘likes’ in Facebook terminology) the page; but does not allow us to view personal feeds of those who have ‘liked’ the page.

Having the Goldfields SHAK set up as a ‘place’ also allows access to the location, phone number, and opening hours of the sexual health clinic.

A written disclaimer was written due to concerns around privacy and bullying. Anyone that likes the page is advised that anything deemed inappropriate by the administrators will have the post deleted and the person responsible for the post will be blocked from the page. A report would also be made to the Facebook administrators. To date there have been no inappropriate comments, bullying or complaints in regards to the Goldfields SHAK.

Only three people have access to the Facebook page. The Sexual Health Coordinator, the Senior Public Health Nurse and the Public Health Physician are the only people with access to the page. The Sexual Health Coordinator monitors the daily running of the page including notifying the team of any issues and coordinates any information that is posted on the page.

Naming the Facebook page

The name ‘Goldfields SHAK’ was chosen from four names put together by the Goldfields Sexual Health Coordinator and Aboriginal Sexual Health Promotion Workers. They were:

- Goldfields SHAK (Sexual Health Advice Klinic)
- Goldfields REHASH (Relationships, Emotions Health and Sexual Health)
- Goldfields SHRUG (Sexual Health Relationships Under Ground)
- Goldfields 4 Youth

The Facebook page was named Goldfields SHAK, 90% of those involved voted for this name. It was felt that by using a ‘k’ in SHAK gave the name a more edgy appearance and would relate to the younger population.

Incorporating a profile picture

The Sexual Health Team coordinated a competition within the WA Goldfields for Community members to submit a profile picture. This had a two pronged approach; one was to promote the page and the other to encourage ownership and community involvement.

The competition was held during the 2012 Sexual health week and required people to submit any picture to be considered for the profile picture for the Goldfields SHAK Facebook page. The winner would receive an IPod and this was promoted through local radio, newspapers and flyers. Unfortunately there were no entries; so the Sexual Health Coordinator designed four pictures which were taken back to the local youth and feedback gained on which would be the profile picture (see picture 1.) for the Goldfields SHAK.
Joining (Like) the Goldfields SHAK Facebook page
To ‘like’ the page a personal Facebook account is required and once this is done then the user can then ‘like’ Goldfields SHAK and this will result in them having accessing to the content (educational information) which will appear on their Facebook page. By liking the page personal messages can also be emailed via the Goldfields SHAK.

Results
As at 31.12.2012 Goldfields SHAK has 125 ‘likes’ (or followers); made up of females 69% and males 31% with 68% of the ‘likers’ aged between 18–34 years.

Information shared via Goldfields SHAK
Information loaded on to the Goldfields SHAK Facebook page by the Sexual Health Coordinator ranges from sexual health (STI and BBV), alcohol and other drug information, puberty, relationships, media campaigns and links to other websites deemed appropriate. New posts occur on average 1–4 times per week.

Issues
Learning how to use Facebook and how to get the most out of a Facebook page for health promotion was time consuming; but has resulted in a great educational and informative Facebook page for the target group.

Conclusion
The number of people who ‘like’ the Goldfields SHAK Facebook page continues to grow as does the diversity of those whom like the page. Goldfields SHAK has become a key component of Health Promotion for the Goldfields Sexual Health Team. Ms Claire Mutton was instrumental in ensuring that the Goldfields SHAK was a success and will continue to be so.

References