

FIELDWORK EXPERIENCES

SPOTS was a voluntary, self-completed behavioural survey with optional dried blood spot (DBS) component.

Study background

Aotearoa New Zealand aims to:

- ✗ Eliminate HIV and prevent STI transmission among MSM
- 👍 Improve blood donation policy for MSM
- 📉 Reduce undiagnosed HIV, Hepatitis C and syphilis

SPOTS involved

- 1 HIV prevention questions
- 2 Blood donation questions
- 3 DBS fingerprick

Consultations

Planning for a study like this, including sensitive questions and blood specimens, posed challenges and we wanted to get things right.

We ran around **38** consultations with communities and stakeholders.

Feedback we received was valuable and helped us improve aspects of the study like language, imagery, recruitment, and study processes.

COVID-19 disruptions

January 2022, 3 weeks before launch, Auckland had an Omicron outbreak.

COVID-19 forced us to pivot the study online, re-purpose our fieldwork staff, pack DBS kits in safe conditions, and assemble everything participants would need to provide a DBS sample at home on their own.



Pioneering DBS in NZ

- No-one had ever tried to use DBS for HIV, hepatitis C, and syphilis research in Aotearoa
- DBS has advantages like being self-collected and stable in the post
- We also used unique identifiers to link participants' behavioural responses with their DBS specimen

Getting the word out

Our four "Hero" **printed posters** were seen around the motu on streets and in health centres and community spaces. They aimed to be sex affirmative, provocative, but also respectful and shareable.



Our **social media ads** allowed us more opportunities to connect with our communities.

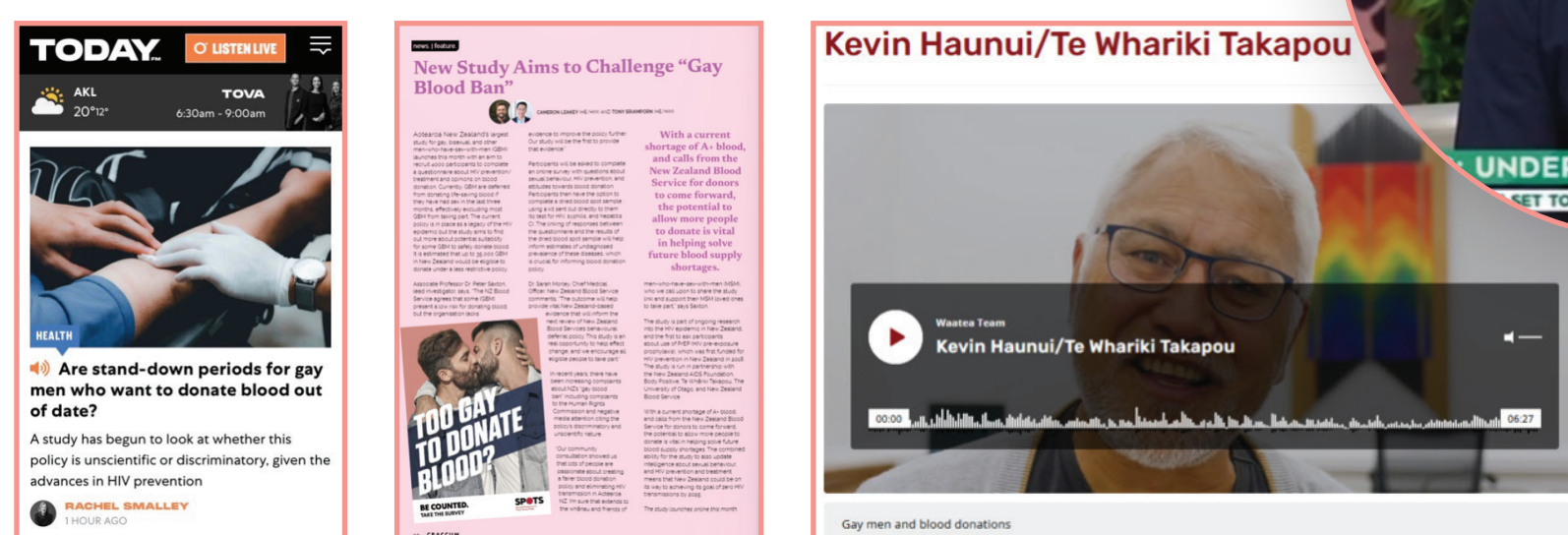


As soon as COVID-19 restrictions lifted we got out among our **communities**.



Media

We did over 30 **media interviews** to get the word out, increasing the reach, familiarity and trust about SPOTS across our diverse communities.



DBS video

James led the at-home DBS video instructions, filmed during lockdown.

The fun and informative instructions were in English, Te Reo Māori and Ngai Tahu dialect.

Innovation award

In Sept 2022 the SPOTS research team were recognised with the Australasian Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance Innovation Award.

