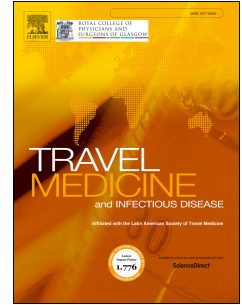


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Dating apps and increased sexual risk behaviors while traveling: Challenges and opportunities for public health

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Dating apps and increased sexual risk behaviors while traveling: challenges and opportunities for public health

Keywords: Mobile Applications, Sexual Behavior, Travel-Related Illness, Travel Medicine.

Geosocial networking applications (apps) on smartphones have become an increasingly common platform to meet sexual partners among both heterosexual and homosexual populations. These apps include Tinder, Grindr, Badoo, Once, OkCupid, Happn, Match.com and many others, each with some variation in specific focus and target audience. Users can easily and freely find sexual partners who are geographically nearby anytime and anywhere as long as they carry their mobile phones. Recently, concern has been raised due to the suspicion that the use of dating apps is associated with high sexual risk behaviors and the acquisition of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially in travelers, in whom the new trend of using dating apps to find sexual encounters in travel has become popular in the last decade.

Some authors considered the use of dating apps as an emerging risk factor for unsafe sexual behaviors¹, sexual abuse and drug misuse.² A recent report found a strong association between using dating apps and sexual risk behaviors among college students in Hong Kong.² In Great Britain, STIs diagnoses and HIV testing were common among men who have sex with men (MSM) reporting finding partners online³ and previous studies in US populations concluded that dating apps users had a higher prevalence of STIs compared with nonusers.⁴⁻⁵ Although studies about dating apps

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