

life SEX, CLINICS, AND VIDEOTAPE

Lucinda Richards introduces a specialist clinic for an unusual patient group—performers who work in pornography

Being in a sexual health clinic is like being on the London Underground—people don't make eye contact and they want to get out as soon as possible. Walking through the waiting room of this particular sexual health clinic in London, you probably wouldn't notice a man chatting to three other people. And you probably wouldn't register that it is an odd setting for a group of friends or colleagues to be together. No one would guess that they have at some point had sex with each other. And looking a little closer, to some, their faces may be familiar.

Sexual health services provide specialist treatment for many groups of patients, but one of the more unusual is men and women who work in the pornographic. In 2002, when a sexual health clinic in London set up a pioneering service for performers in pornography, named the Indigo Clinic, as a reference

Before studying medicine, I worked for more than two years as a sexual health adviser, delivering care to

A sleazy industry?

As an industry, pornography undeniably has a seedy image. However, this is starting to change in the United Kingdom as the industry follows the lead of the United States, where the multibillion dollar industry is a well regulated professional business. As a result, actors have safer working conditions and there is less exploitation, and they consider sexual health to be paramount.

Judy Finkbeiner started with Sharon Mitchell, an actor and former drug addict who abandoned her work as a performer, became a doctor, and went on to change the industry. In 1999 Mitchell was called upon to investigate an outbreak of HIV that

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the Adult Industry Medical Health Care Foundation (AIM), in Los Angeles, the main organisation that provides sexual health care for performers, and maintaining the strict requirements for sexual health care for performers by providing support groups

Increasingly they are demanding a service for performers to have regular sexual health checks. Producers previously requested that it has led to problems for the more risk group without the high costs of

Sexual health in this industry is arguably missing an obvious trick—towards increasing condom use in sex. The industry follows the lead of the United States, where the multibillion dollar industry is a well regulated professional business. As a result, actors have safer working conditions and there is less exploitation, and they consider sexual health to be paramount.

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partners outside the industry, mean that the actors are at constant risk of HIV. With such an extensive web of sexual networks, an asymptomatic infection can be rapidly transmitted among this population by the time it is diagnosed

The Indigo Clinic

The Indigo Clinic is part of a London NHS sexual health clinic and runs five days a week. It provides full sexual health screening; certificates of sexual health results, for which an administration charge is required; condoms; and service without the stigma that this group often encounters elsewhere. Importantly, in contrast with much of the private sector, there is follow-up care after positive results, and ongoing advice about health promotion and risk reduction. This has a positive effect on the patient, the industry, and the wider population.

by the many patients registered at the clinic: since the service was established, almost 270 performers have attended, with an almost equal number of men. The changing core of 25-30 who attend on a publicised through word of mouth, is so in demand that performers travel to the clinic from as far as Scotland, Wales,

do not conform to their stereotyped image. Experienced professionals who produce the actors have partners outside the industry, some of whom are oblivious to their partner's work, which is risky in terms of who attend the clinic are heterosexual or

Many sex workers have been forced into their industry because of drug addiction. What is driving this diverse group of

