

VCH Community Engagement



Planet Ahead Condomania Refresh

Stakeholder Engagement Report

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Introduction

Planet Ahead Condomania (referred to in this document as “Condomania”) is a peer-based sexual health education program focused on youth aged 12-15 in Vancouver. Operating since 1991, the program primarily provides educational workshops delivered by volunteer peer (youth) educators in school settings. Workshop topics include peer pressure, healthy relationships, safer sex practices and gender issues. The stated goal of the program is “to shape attitudes, values and behaviours that promote sexual health for a lifelong impact.” In addition to workshops, Condomania also conducts outreach at youth events and maintains the www.planetahead.ca website. Condomania is situated within the Mental Health and Addictions portfolio in VCH Vancouver with the Youth Addictions and Prevention programs.

For many years Condomania was a VCH contracted service operated by an external and independent coordinator. Two years ago, VCH brought the program ‘in-house’ by creating an internal coordinator position. Work to continue to integrate the activities of Condomania more fully into VCH programs and services is ongoing. The efforts to engage community partners in this consultation are a part of this quality improvement and review process.

Project Overview

Condomania sought a refresh in order to stay current and ensure it is reaching its target audience and providing needed information. The project team sought support from CE to engage with selected stakeholders – namely teachers, counselors, current and former peer educators, community partner organizations and VCH staff and management - to provide feedback on how the program could be more comprehensive in scope and to refresh branding & web presence to be more reflective of current best practices.

Who Did We Hear From?

In January and February 2014, CE held two focus group sessions and conducted fourteen interviews with stakeholders identified by Condomania staff. A total of twenty-three people participated including representatives from:

- Vancouver School Board (VSB) - Teachers and counselors who are familiar with the Condomania program (henceforth referred to as “school staff” to avoid confusion with Peer Educators).
- Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) - Managers and staff in Public Health and Hope 2 Health.
- Current and former Peer Educators with the Condomania program.
- Community organizations - YouthCo, Qmunity and Options for Sexual Health

Key Findings

1. Workshop format and content meets the needs of teachers and counselors

Overall, teachers and counselors who had seen Condomania workshops delivered to students were very positive about the content and format. Their sense was that Condomania had a good reputation among school staff and a well-established “brand” due to its longevity. Participants spoke highly of the peer educator model which they noted provided a role model for students and reduced some of the awkwardness that can be associated with the subject matter. It was also noted that the workshops do an excellent job of using inclusive language regarding gender and sexual diversity. Teachers and counselors appreciated the interactivity of the workshops and that the content is delivered in a fun and accessible yet “mature” and professional way.

2. Program name “Planet Ahead Condomania” is problematic

Most participants were unfamiliar with the “Planet Ahead” part of the program name and knew the program simply as Condomania. While several focus group and interview participants reported liking the name “Condomania” because it’s fun, “edgy” and memorable, most participants expressed concern about the name. These concerns fell into three general categories:

- *The name feels dated.*

VCH staff and some school staff said the name was reminiscent of the more “in your face” sexual health education style of the 1990s.

- *The name does not reflect the content of the workshop.*

Many felt that, “Condomania” gives the impression that the workshops are exclusively about condoms when condoms are merely a small part of the presentation. Participants spoke about how the content of the workshop is much more about healthy relationships and responsible decision-making, rather than just safe sex.

- *The “edginess” of the name can be a barrier for uptake by teachers and parents.*

Teachers, Counselors and Peer Educators talked about how some school staff who are less comfortable with sexual health education, or who serve a student population with parents who hold more conservative values (such as some independent schools), may be disinclined to book a workshop due to the name. One teacher mentioned that when she sends a letter home to parents informing them of the upcoming Condomania workshop, she intentionally does not use the name “Condomania” in the letter for fear of alarming parents.

3. Current web design and content is dated and excludes LGBT youth but has potential to be a great tool for youth, parents and school staff

General consensus was that the current www.planetahead.ca website was extremely dated, both in style and substance. One Peer Educator reported that they don't reference the website in their workshops because it is so outdated. While Condomania workshop content was noted for its inclusion of LGBTTIQ perspectives, several people expressed concern about the lack of LGBTTIQ representation on the website, particularly the use of the binary characters "Lucy Lube" and "Captain Condom." Most participants recommended that youth be engaged in co-designing a new site, and suggested inclusion of the following components:

- *Greater interactivity and continual updating, e.g. blogging and posting articles or videos to keep the content fresh and engaging.*

In particular, participants felt it was important to maintain the "Just Ask" section, but enable questions to be submitted anonymously through text or social media (Author's note: due to privacy concerns, please consult with VCH Communications and Privacy Office before engaging social media for this purpose)

- *Develop a parents' portal.*

This could provide parents with information about the workshops, FAQs or a "Just Ask" for parents, and tips for talking to your child pre and post-workshop. A parents' portal was frequently mentioned, however, one participant expressed concern that a parents' portal might deter youth from accessing the site.

- *Link to other specialized resources.*

Some participants suggested that the Condomania site should focus on providing links to other high-quality specialized information resources, so that they do not need to "reinvent" the resources that already exist.

- *Ensure the site is mobile-friendly.*
- *Ensure that all web content is reflective of sexual and gender diversity.*

Redesign of the website was also frequently mentioned as a critical piece for increasing uptake of the workshops. Participants recommended:

- *More detailed information about the workshops themselves*

Many participants expressed a desire for a detailed outline of the workshop content to be available online. Video clips were frequently mentioned as a mechanism for school staff and parents to get a better sense of the workshop content and format in advance. Some participants mentioned that if school staff could see a short clip of how interactive and engaging the workshops are, they would be very motivated to book them.

- *Testimonials.*

Testimonials from students, school staff and parents were frequently mentioned as an important element of getting buy-in from school staff and parents. Again, many people recommended embedded YouTube videos of people providing testimonials.

- *Online booking for workshops.*

School staff unanimously supported incorporating an online booking function on the website. Some suggested an online calendar that would allow them to see workshop availability at a glance and then submit their top-three potential dates when booking. One participant recommended that an online booking be followed by a telephone confirmation.

Other comments regarding the website:

- Check out www.scarleteen.com and www.neonology.wordpress.com as good examples.
- Include information on how to become a Peer Educator with Condomania.
- The McCreary Institute youth survey has information on what youth are seeking in regards to sex education www.mcs.bc.ca

4. Increasing uptake will require relationship-building and new marketing materials

When asked how to increase uptake of the workshops, participant suggestions fell into three main categories:

- *Use targeted presentations and existing professional information-sharing hubs to increase awareness of Condomania among school staff.*
 - Deliver presentations or workshops to Regional Professional Day events, Parent Advisory Committees (PACs) and monthly meeting of all Vancouver School Board Department Heads. Distribute a promotional package with testimonials and details about workshop content at these presentations.
 - Post articles and workshop notices on DASH BC www.dashbc.ca and Healthy Schools BC www.healthyschoolsbc.ca websites.
 - Seek education or promotion opportunities through the BC Teachers' Federation and BC Association of School Counselors www.bctf.ca/bcsca/
 - Submit articles or notices to the weekly Vancouver School Board newsletter – there is one for teachers and one for administrators.
- *Establish relationships with school staff so they can promote Condomania with their peers.*

Most often, school staff and Peer Educators talked about the importance of peer influence when it comes to creating buy-in from teachers and counselors, i.e. that they would be more likely to book a workshop like Condomania if a peer recommended it to them. However, it was noted that if you want school staff to promote your workshop to peers, it

needs to be made easy for them. The following suggestions were made on who to connect with and how to start building and leveraging those relationships:

- Multiple participants spoke of the need to establish champions in every school. Counselors and Biology teachers were mentioned as potential champions. The VSB “Safe Contact” (one staff person at each school who is designated as a safe person for LGBT students to connect with) was frequently suggested as a good option. There is a list of who the Safe Contacts are in each school.
 - School nurses (known within VCH as Public Health Nurses, or PHNs) were mentioned as natural allies to promote Condomania to staff in their schools. Many school staff talked about having a high-degree of trust in their school’s nurse.
 - Develop an email template that teachers who have seen the workshop can send to their peers testifying to the quality of the workshop.
 - Develop a promotional package for school staff to give to their peers.
 - Develop a mechanism to keep school staff in the loop on an ongoing basis, e.g. news, program changes, evaluation results.
 - Some suggested providing incentives for school staff to book workshops. For example, a decal or certificate that communicates: “I support quality sexual health education for my students.” Others thought that incentives like certificates should be offered at the school level, e.g. for schools that have workshops delivered to every grade. One person suggested entering school staff who book workshops in quarterly draws for prizes.
- *Engage students in requesting workshops.*

Some participants felt that Condomania could encourage students to request workshops in their schools, possibly through anonymous text message. Promoting workshops to students could be done through posters in schools, advertising on transit or free newspapers, through social media or through outreach at youth events like health fairs, Pride Forum, or the upcoming Teenfest www.teenfest.ca. Gay/Straight Alliances were also mentioned as a potential source of student “champions” within the schools.

When asked about this, one school staff commented that if a large enough group of students requested a particular workshop, then they would pursue it. One participant, however, thought that marketing the workshops to students might require a lot of resources and yield few actual bookings.

5. Community partners can help extend Condomania’s reach.

Community organizations doing similar work to Condomania, e.g. SACY, Options for Sexual Health BC, and YouthCo were often referenced as a potential resource to help promote Condomania. It was suggested that Condomania connect with these organizations to promote workshops through their websites or other contacts. It was also suggested that partner organizations may be willing to provide education to Condomania Peer Educators to ensure their curriculum is current and reflects best practice. Representatives from YouthCo were particularly keen to help.

6. Condomania should seek better alignment with other related VCH services and strategic directions

Participants from VCH expressed concern that the Condomania program seems disconnected from the rest of the organization. VCH respondents were concerned that Condomania may be a duplication of services with both the Child and Youth Public Health Nurses (PHNs) who are mandated to deliver sexual health education in the schools, and YouthCo, which is contracted by VCH to deliver HIV-education in the schools. VCH participants saw great potential for collaboration with the PHNs in the schools. Indeed, one school staff reported bringing in their school's PHN as a complement to the Condomania workshop, because the school's PHN will be an ongoing resource to students after the Condomania workshop is over.

It was noted by one respondent that Hope 2 Health is moving away from school-based HIV-prevention work in accordance with the current evidence, which supports more targeted HIV-education for populations most at risk, e.g. young gay men.

7. Condomania could benefit from improved evaluation practices.

Participants mentioned that due to time constraints during workshops, not enough emphasis is currently placed on completion of post-workshop evaluation forms by students. However, evaluation was frequently mentioned by school staff and Peer Educators as a tool that could serve to keep Condomania current (by checking in with youth about content, brand, etc.). A former Peer Educator mentioned sending the evaluation results from a workshop to the teacher or counselor as a way of strengthening communication and relationships with that staff member. Other school staff suggested that publishing evaluation results on the website would help establish credibility with professionals who are considering booking a workshop. Evaluation forms would also help glean testimonials to be included on promotional materials. Recognizing that limited time is available in workshops to conduct evaluation, one school staff member suggested using real-time apps like iClicker or online evaluation forms.

8. Condomania could benefit from an ongoing advisory committee.

Several participants suggested that establishment of an advisory committee of key stakeholders could help Condomania to stay current; keep the program connected to other VCH services and provide support in promoting the workshops.

Additional Findings:

The following comments fell outside of the scope of this consultation, but were echoed by a couple of participants and so warranted inclusion.

- *The current cost of Condomania workshops is not a barrier for Vancouver public schools.*

Although not directly asked about the cost of the workshops, some school staff mentioned that the price-point for the workshops is good and that VSB schools have budget to cover these expenses. It is unknown as to whether or not the cost is a barrier for independent schools.

- *Consider moving education outside of the classroom and/or outside of Vancouver.*

Some participants suggested that Condomania may want to look at delivering sexual health education at youth events or in places where youth gather, like beaches.

One participant also wondered if Condomania should be focusing its efforts on providing education in more rural communities where there is less access to sexual health education. He mentioned the Sex Now survey <http://www.cbrc.net/sexnow>, which surveyed self-identified gay men across Canada, and found that gay men experienced the greatest isolation and lack of education and support outside of urban centres.

Suggested Action

The following recommendations, organized into short, medium and longer-term actions, were developed by the Community Engagement team based on what we heard in focus groups and interviews with Condomania stakeholders. These suggested actions are high-level and not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Short-term Action:

- *Further engagement with youth in the Condomania “Refresh” process.*

This consultation process was focused on capturing the perspectives of professionals. Further engagement of youth to get input into brand image, web presence and workshop promotion would be beneficial before proceeding with further planning.

Medium-term Action:

- *Establish a program advisory committee*

Include representatives from VSB, VCH Public Health and Prevention services and partner organizations. In the near term, this committee can support the development and implementation of the communications strategy and foster greater connection to VCH and community organizations. Longer term, this committee can help to ensure that Condomania remains in line with changes in the evidence and change inside VCH, VSB and in the community. An advisory committee may also be able to review evaluation results and advise on future quality improvement activities.

- *Forge stronger relationships with Child and Youth Public Health Nurses (PHNs).*

Public Health Nurses are assigned to all public and independent schools across the Vancouver Coastal Health region. By strengthening this relationship, there may be opportunities for greater collaboration with PHNs in promoting and delivering workshops and build consistencies in communication and networking. Strengthening relationships with this group can be initiated by connecting with the Children and Youth Practice Leader or designate in each Community of Care.

- *Develop a comprehensive communications strategy based upon feedback contained in this report, input from an advisory committee and further input from youth.*

At minimum, this strategy should include:

- Consideration of a program name change.
- Development of a new brand image and redesign of the program website. It is recommended that a professional design firm with experience in co-designing with youth be hired to do this work. Parent and school staff portals should be designed in consultation with those stakeholders, incorporating some of the suggestions contained in this report.

Longer-term Action:

- *Review evaluation practices.*

Work with VCH Community Engagement to design and test a robust evaluation tool for participants of Condomania workshops. Explore technologies that may enable evaluation to be done quickly and consistently after every workshop. Make evaluation results available to school staff.