Toon Darn Hot

A daring website makes prevention sexy and fun again

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Big Lou found what he wanted in an online chat room—a 32-year-old guy named Dylan who looks about 21. The two meet at Club Vibrate and kick off the night with cocaine. Lou soon passes out on the dance floor from mixing Viagra and poppers. But to paraphrase legendary toon Jessica Rabbit, these guys aren't bad: They're just drawn that way. Big Lou and Dylan are strictly two-dimensional—like the 18 other animated characters that maneuver their way through sex-and drug-related vignettes on mysexycity.com. A new HIV education and harm reduction website developed by Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) and AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), it targets young gay and bisexual men of color, who can help to determine the fates of some characters.

"Our research reveals that gay and bisexual men enjoy the convenience of the Internet, and many prefer it to bars or clubs. Mysexycity.com reaches at-risk young men to educate them about healthy choices," says George Ayala, PsyD, director of the Institute for Gay Men's Health, a national collaboration between APLA and GMHC.

GMHC and APLA estimate that half of black gay and bisexual men—and 31% across all races—in the U.S. have HIV. Mysexycity.com hopes to reach positive and negative men of color between the ages of 18 and 29.

The site also offers blogs, surveys, chat rooms, bulletin boards, referral information and e-cards to foster an online community where visitors can meet, share information and ask questions. All you square pants, beware.

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