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**Reimagining Risk:
Understanding Encounters in Gay and Bisexual Men's Sexual Health**

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Since 1997, there has been a significant increase in syphilis amongst gay and bisexual men in the UK, in addition to rising rates of HIV. This paper emerges from research conducted in the North East of England which explores gay and bisexual men's understandings of risk within this increasingly complex sexual health environment. The research explores understandings of risk through Sara Ahmed's notion of encounters. The notion of encounters is that individual moments or meetings (the specific) are always at play with wider histories and cultures (the general). This approach considers, therefore, not only how the immediate encounter between men, with available health information or through interaction with the larger health care system plays a role in understandings of risk in sexual health, but also how wider histories and experiences of illness, disease and otherness are also always present and integral to understandings of the self, and risks to the self. Key themes that have emerged from the research include ideas about the local and the global, the stranger and the familiar, as well as identity and place. These all are critical elements in formulations of risk and point to how understandings of risk are not static but are constantly negotiated and renegotiated with each encounter.

I currently hold an ESRC Collaborative PhD Studentship at Newcastle University in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology. This research explores gay and bisexual men's understandings of risk in sexual health in the North East. I am interested in the ways in which narratives of risk are constructed through medical discourse and how they are negotiated and challenged through queer every day practices. Before starting my PhD at Newcastle University, I worked at the Institute of Development Studies (Sussex) on health, HIV, sexual rights and knowledge exchange.