

CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALES WITH GONORRHOEA IN NSW, 2018 – A CASE SERIES INVESTIGATION

Authors: Phelan S^{1 2}, Fitzgerald T³, Kaldor J¹, Guy R¹, Donovan B¹, Sheppeard V³, McNulty J³, Selvey C³.

¹ *The Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales*

² *National Centre for Epidemiology & Population Health, Research School of Population Health, Australian National University*

³ *Health Protection NSW, NSW Health*

Background: Gonorrhoea notification rates have increased substantially in heterosexuals in urban areas across Australia over the past decade. The objective of this investigation was to describe the characteristics of women notified to New South Wales (NSW) Health with gonorrhoea and their partners.

Methods: Women aged ≥18 years who resided in NSW, for whom a gonorrhoea notification had been made to NSW Health from 21 May to 17 June 2018, were asked to complete a questionnaire on personal and partner risk behaviours (sex workers were asked about non-paying partners). Participants could complete the investigation questionnaire with their clinician, via a survey sent through SMS or email, or by phone. A descriptive analysis was conducted based on responses regarding the first partner only and stratified by sex worker status.

Results: To date, 62 questionnaires have been received from 119 women, giving a response rate of 52%. Of the 62 participants, 33% identified as sex workers, 3% as Aboriginal, 58% were Australian born and 90% resided in an urban area. In the three months prior to their gonorrhoea diagnosis, most respondents did not have sex overseas (94%), and their last sexual partner was male (98%). Of these partners, 26% were not Australian born, 40% were non-regular partners, and 12% had travelled overseas. Of the non-regular partners, 35% met through friends, 25% through a dating app, 25% through a mixture of places, and 15% preferred not to say. Most participants (92%) believed their partner was heterosexual, 6% bisexual, and 2% did not know. Condom use for oral, vaginal and anal sex was: 0%, 46% and 0% (sex workers), and 16%, 32% and 33% (non-sex workers), respectively.

Conclusion: Sex overseas and sex with bisexual men do not appear to be major risk behaviours in this population. Low condom use highlights the need for further condom promotion.

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