

BLOOD BORNE VIRUSES AND SEXUALLY TRANSMISSIBLE INFECTIONS AMONG TRANSGENDER MEN AND WOMEN ATTENDING AUSTRALIAN SEXUAL HEALTH CLINICS

Callander D^{1,2}, Tsang J³, Cook T⁴, Russel D⁵, Vlahakis E⁶, Fairley CK^{7,8}, Read P^{1,9}, Hellard M¹⁰, Kaldor J¹, Donovan B^{1,11}, Guy R¹

¹Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney

²Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Sydney

³Australian Red Cross

⁴Peer Advocacy for the Sexual Health of Trans Masculinities (PASH.tm)

⁵Cairns Sexual Health Service

⁶Clinic 916, Coffs Harbour Sexual Health Clinic

⁷Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

⁸Central Clinical School, Monash University

⁹Kirketon Road Centre

¹⁰Burnet Institute

¹¹Sydney Sexual Health Centre, Sydney Hospital

Background: While in many parts of the world transgender people are at increased risk of blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections (STIs), little is known about prevalence in Australia. This gap in our knowledge has potentially major implications for prevention efforts and service delivery.

Methods: De-identified health data were extracted from 41 sexual health clinics participating in a national health surveillance network ('ACCESS') over a seven-year period. Among patients recorded as 'trans', we used data from the first test in the study period to estimate the prevalence of HIV, hepatitis C, chlamydia, gonorrhoea and infectious syphilis. Tests at multiple anatomical sites were collapsed into a single event; Chi-squared analyses were used to assess differences.

Results: From 2010-2016, 755 patients recorded as trans or equivalent attended a participating clinic: 303 were recorded as trans women, 235 as trans men and for 217 there was no further specification. At first visit, 5.2% recorded as previously diagnosed with HIV infection (8.9% of trans women, 4.5% trans men and 3.2% of those not further specified; $p=0.04$) and 1.9% had chronic hepatitis C infection (3.7%, 1.3%, 1.1%; $p=0.1$). There were no new diagnoses of HIV or hepatitis C; 14.0% of the 499 patients who received a test were diagnosed with a bacterial STI (12.6%, 8.8%, 18.0%; $p<0.001$). Ten per cent of trans patients were diagnosed with chlamydia (8.6%, 7.0%, 13.2%; $p=0.2$); 6.0% with gonorrhoea (5.4%, 1.9%, 9.1%; $p=0.04$), and 3.1% with infectious syphilis (3.6%, 1.0%, 4.0%; $p=0.4$).

Conclusion: This analysis provides the first comprehensive estimates of blood borne viruses and STIs among a sample of trans and gender diverse people in Australia, and it highlights just how different these can be among those broadly identified as transgender. Systems of health data must be improved to better identify trans patients, including their current gender identity.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: No conflicts to declare.