

ENGAGING PRIMARY CARE IN HIV TESTING AND PREVENTION

- Chris Lemoh, Monash Health

HIV is unique in being a sexually transmitted chronic illness. Australia has a relatively low incidence and prevalence of HIV infection, but the benefits of recent advances in treatment and prevention are inequitably distributed. No one should be left behind in Australia's response to HIV: Everyone living with HIV should have ready access to effective treatment, appropriate support and the opportunity to live free of stigma and discrimination. Everyone with HIV infection should be diagnosed before they fall ill or expose others to the virus. Everyone at risk of HIV exposure should know how to avoid infection and have access to the means to do so.

Achieving this goal needs more than the "HIV sector" - primary health providers need to know about HIV in 21st century Australia: HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and support is part of primary health care for individuals and communities across Australia. The challenge is to integrate HIV with all the other aspects of primary care. Primary health care providers have great experience in sexual and reproductive health as well as chronic illness. Rather than being an extra burden, we should regard this as an opportunity to evolve as individual practitioners and professions, working together to improve the health and wellbeing of our society.