

# **Electronic optimisation of annual health assessments increases testing for sexually transmissible infections (STIs) at an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) in New South Wales (NSW)**

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## **Background:**

As part of the NSW syphilis response, we collaboratively designed a systems change with a NSW ACCHS to increase uptake and completeness of STI testing among Aboriginal young people aged 15–29. The main component was electronic medical record prompts and shortcuts to include STI testing in annual health assessments (Medicare Item 715). Other strategies included credentialling of nurses and Aboriginal Health Practitioners to conduct STI tests independently and pre-signed pathology requests.

## **Methods:**

We used a mixed-methods design to evaluate the impact and acceptability of the systems change. Between April 2017 and March 2020, we calculated the annual proportion of health assessments which included any/complete STI tests for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis, and a glucose test (internal control). We also conducted an interrupted time series analysis of quarterly proportions in the 24 months before and 2 months after the systems change and analysed in-depth semi-structured interviews with six ACCHS staff using Normalisation Process Theory.

## **Results:**

Among 2,461 young people attending the ACCHS, the annual proportion of health assessments that included any STI test increased from 23% before the change to 43% after, with the greatest change in syphilis testing with a chlamydia/gonorrhoea test (56%-75%). There was an immediate and large increase during the quarter when the systems change occurred (0.22,  $P < 0.01$ ) with no decline in quarterly proportions for 12 months thereafter. The increase was greater for men with no change for the internal control. Nurse- and Aboriginal Health Practitioner-led testing and pre-signed pathology forms proved more difficult to normalise than electronic prompts and shortcuts.

## **Conclusion:**

This study provides evidence for the first time that optimising the health assessment electronically is an effective strategy to increase and sustain integration and completeness of STI testing among Aboriginal young people attending ACCHS. Future strategies should focus on increasing uptake of health assessments.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

None