

RURAL AND REMOTE HIV MANAGEMENT SERVICE ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL: A 20 YEAR EXPERIENCE OF PROVIDING HIV CARE IN THE WORLD'S LARGEST HEALTH JURISDICTION

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Background: The Royal Perth Hospital Rural and Remote HIV service has coordinated management of people diagnosed with HIV in remote Western Australia (WA) since 1998. WA is the largest health jurisdiction in the world with the state encompassing a land area of more than 2.5 million square kilometres.

Approach: The service was established in response to increasing numbers of patients in rural areas being diagnosed with HIV. Provision of care has been in a multimodality form with the flexibility to respond to patient need and technological advances over time. Clinical review and medication provision has been provided by combined specialist metropolitan clinician and nurse visits to larger centres and engagement of local health care staff and practitioners. Telemedicine is increasingly used.

Outcomes/Impact: Since inception, 330 patients living in rural areas have received care through this service, accounting for 1800 patient/ years of care. An additional 49 patients living overseas and 22 patients working fly in/ fly out have utilised the service. The remoteness of many patients is reflected by the median distance from metropolitan Perth being 593 km and 130 (39%) living in what are deemed the most remote parts of Australia for healthcare (RA4 and RA5). Thirty-nine pregnancies were managed with only one episode of vertical transmission. As at December 31st 2018, 177 patients were enrolled in the service with 91% of those diagnosed receiving treatment and 94% of those having an undetectable viral load.

Innovation and Significance: The positive outcomes for patients in the service enables this model to act as a template for other health services providing care to patients with HIV living in remote regions. The service has enabled persons living with HIV in one of the largest health care regions in the world to receive care comparative to those living in metropolitan areas.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

None