

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN SEXUAL HEALTH FROM PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

I am extremely grateful and humbled by this award. I accept this award on the understanding that infused through my presentation is my unending appreciation for the enormous contribution that my Australian colleagues have made. The warmth with which I was greeted, the exceptional work ethic of our people, their enthusiasm for the exciting changes we have made together and their sharing of our successes – exceed any expectations I could reasonably have had; and say so much about them and their professionalism. Many deserve mention but I especially wish to thank James, whose support with every detail of my professional life has been truly exceptional and allowed me more time to work.

This presentation will be about the importance of change and observation. Human behaviour has changed. STI rates have changed. STIs have changed and technology has changed. If our community is to have any chance of controlling STIs then we must understand this change. We must understand all that we see; without exception. We must be able to explain the epidemiology and clinical observations or we can have no hope of understanding how to control them.

I will discuss what drives STIs? It is so simple to assume it is the number of sexual partners; but this leaves so much unexplained. I'll discuss the importance of health care and access to it for the control of particularly symptomatic STIs. But for asymptomatic ones – what can work? Screening seems so sensible and important – but is there evidence it actually works? What is the role of behavioural interventions- and what specific behaviour should we or could we change? Hopefully some things we can; like marriage equality – and while I don't know the outcome of our expensive opinion poll- I do so hope from the bottom of my heart, Australians vote yes.