

THE SEXUAL HEALTH OF HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE: THE BENEFITS OF HEALTH SERVICES IN A CO-LOCATED SETTING.

Cook S¹, Parrott C¹, Henning D¹

¹ Department of Adolescent Medicine, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, Australia

Stuart.cook@rch.org.au

Background/Approach: The Young People's Health Service (YPHS) is a nurse-led clinic that provides primary health care to young people aged 12-24 in Melbourne's CBD who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness. YPHS is a program of the Department of Adolescent Medicine at the Royal Children's Hospital. Co-located at a youth housing access point, YPHS offers primary health care to some of Melbourne's most vulnerable young people. Clients accessing housing services are offered referrals to YPHS for opportunistic health care. Advanced practice nurses (APN's) conduct thorough psychosocial health assessments using the HEADSS tool. Sexual health is a significant part of the HEADSS assessment process and through it, STI screening is routinely offered.

Analysis/Argument: Many of the clients who attend YPHS are unaware of the need or the process of having routine screens for sexual health. A health service which is co-located with other social services such as housing, Centrelink and legal services, provides an ideal environment to perform opportunistic STI screening and improve follow-up of positive results.

Outcomes/Results: Between 2014 and 2016, 640 chlamydia tests were performed (325 females, 315 males) and the prevalence amongst this cohort was 10.8% (n=69). Of the 69 positive cases, 51% were female and 49% were male. 90% of these young people were treated at YPHS or referred to a specialised service for treatment.

Conclusion/Applications: Health Services in a co-located setting provide unique opportunities to engage homeless young people in comprehensive health care, including STI screening and follow-up. Co-location may be a significant factor contributing to the successful treatment of positive chlamydia cases at YPHS. Furthermore, APN's play a vital role in increasing opportunistic STI screening and follow up for this population who may have slipped through the gaps of the mainstream health system.