

Evaluating ASHM's Syphilis Testing in Antenatal Settings: Train the Trainer Course

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Background/Purpose:

Australia is responding to a resurgence of syphilis, declared a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance, alongside a concerning increase in congenital syphilis, with 103 cases reported between 2015 and 2024. Updated national guidelines now recommend universal syphilis screening at three points during pregnancy, substantially increasing testing in antenatal care. This has created an urgent need to rapidly scale workforce capability, ensuring clinicians are equipped to test, interpret results, and manage care effectively. In response, ASHM's Syphilis Testing in Antenatal Settings: Train the Trainer program, established in 2024, supports the upskilling of antenatal providers and promotes consistent, guideline-aligned practice to strengthen Australia's response and contribute to the elimination of congenital syphilis.

Approach:

The model engaged a master trainer to train health staff in their services who were less experienced in antenatal syphilis testing and congenital syphilis. Participants completed Online Learning Modules and attended a live-facilitated webinar. Following these components, participants delivered their own training on syphilis in their service.

Outcomes/Impact:

There were 83 total attendees across four live-facilitated webinars between November 2025 and March 2026. Of these, 54 participants completed the post-webinar evaluation survey. Participants reported the following:

- 98.1% (n=54) reported that they were familiar with their jurisdiction's clinical guidelines for antenatal syphilis testing.
- 96.1% (n=51) reported that they were mostly or entirely able to discuss referral pathways and support for positive syphilis cases in pregnancy.

Ten participants (n=39) also stated that they would encourage opportunistic STI testing and increase screening.

Six participants (n=83) ran training sessions in their practice, resulting in a further estimated 121 staff educated.

Innovation and Significance:

The course was effective in raising awareness and increasing knowledge on syphilis case management for antenatal care providers, responding to the priorities outlined in the National Syphilis Response plan. The Train the Trainer model allows for sustainable, local capacity building across Australia, and ASHM has re-used this

model in its new Train the Trainer: PEP and Emergency Contraception in Acute Settings course.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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