

Enhanced Syphilis Point of Care Testing program at Central Australian Aboriginal Congress – a practice based approach to early identification of new cases in an Outbreak.

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Background/Purpose:

- While identified as a useful tool in identification of new cases and reduction in time to treatment¹, Syphilis point of care testing (PoCT) had shown limited uptake and usage by clinicians in front line primary health care settings at Central Australian Aboriginal Congress since the initial rollout of the program.
- Given increasing notification rates in Central Australia², the purpose of the project is timely identification, treatment and contact tracing for infectious cases.

Approach:

- Consultation with clinicians demonstrated a number of factors that contributed to reluctance to undertake point of care testing, including lack of clarity around the clients appropriateness for a PoCT, access to the tests and being unsure about how to convey the result of the test in an appropriate context.
- An enhanced training/ refresher program and upscaled testing kit rollout was undertaken across all sites in an attempt to encourage increased testing and provide easier access to the testing equipment.
- In consultation with Flinders University International Centre for point of care Testing, NACCHO, and Congress clinicians, individual desk top kits were distributed for clinic rooms to provide increased access to tests and prevent unwanted interruption to consults.
- Rollout was accompanied by training sessions for all clinical staff across town and remote settings. These were delivered either face to face or online to increase access.
- Flow charts and information sheets were developed, outlining organisational processes for identification of known previously reactive cases as well as communication pathways for accessing additional information and support.

Quality Control:

- Existing Flinders program processes remain in place with enhanced quarterly desk top kit site audits, monitoring and restocking.
- Individual kit numbers and contents are tracked by the sexual health team.

Outcomes/ Impact:

- Since rollout of the enhanced training and desktop kits, there has been a 360 % increase in syphilis PoCT test compared to the previous 12 month period. Aug- July 2021-22 vs Aug- July 2022-23

Innovation and Significance:

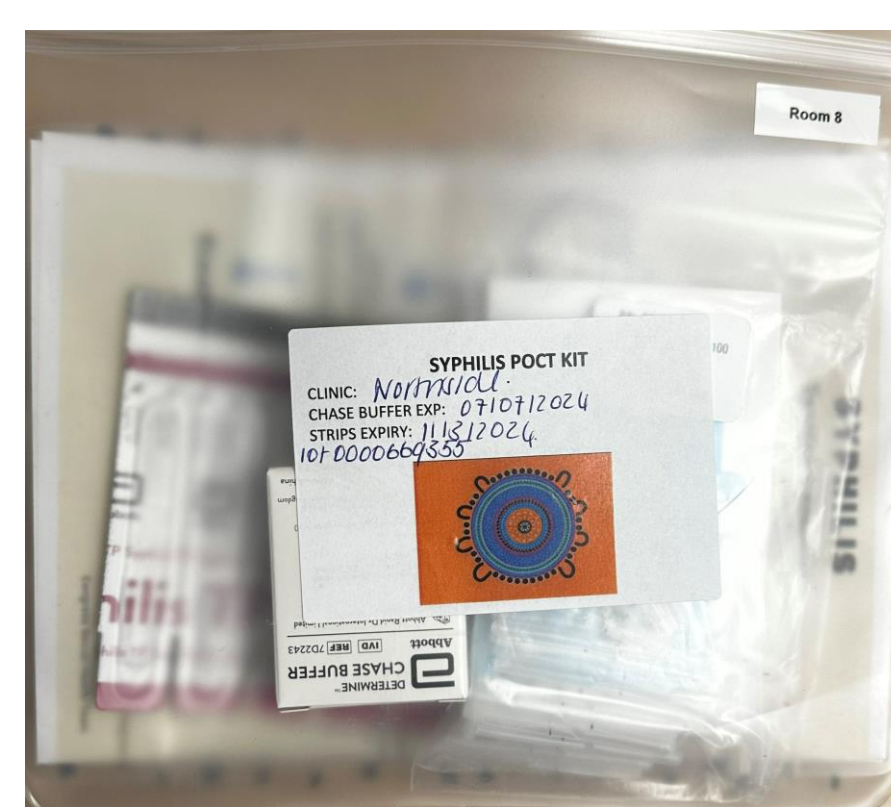
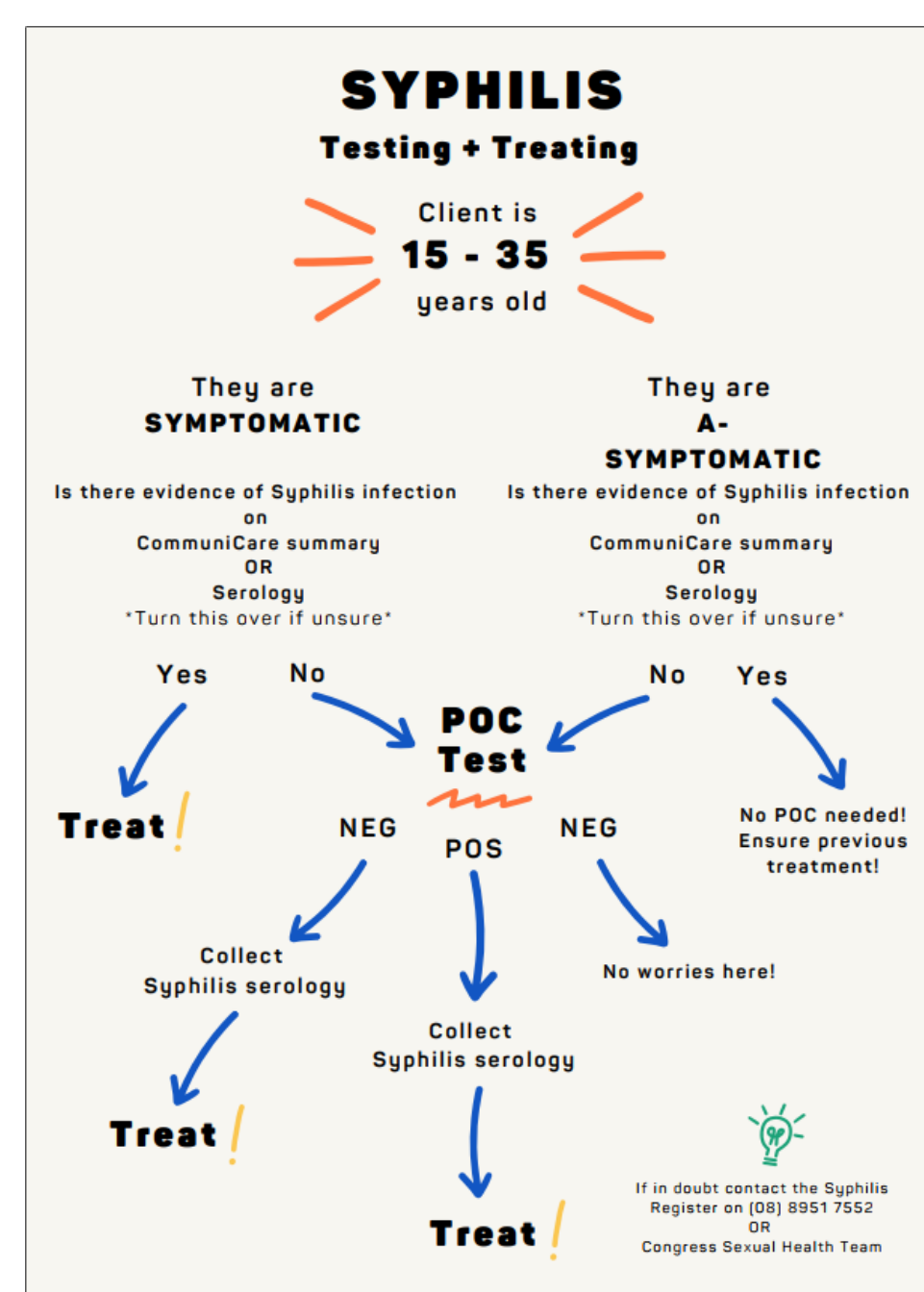
- Use of Syphilis PoCT may assist with reduction in risk of transmission via potential decreased time to treatment, eliminating potential barriers to follow up in an often very transient population.
- Rollout of desktop kits may reduce interruption to consults as they are literally “on hand” for clinicians undertaking routine screening or adult health checks in the primary health care setting.
- Enhanced education, staff support and addressing accessibility to testing in clinic settings has assisted in increasing testing numbers significantly

Acknowledgements:

This project was made possible with the support of the Enhanced Syphilis Response team at NACCHO and the Syphilis Point of Care Testing Team at Flinders University and the commitment of the primary health care and sexual health teams at Congress

References

1. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. (2023, June 2). *National response to syphilis*
2. *Enhanced syphilis response (ESR)*. NACCHO. (2022, July 13).



The Sexual health team, Roisin, Dom and Lizzie and PHC nurse Camille who made a major contribution to development of the kit decision making flow chart (far left)



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ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



NACCHO
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

