

# Clinical presentation of asymptomatic and symptomatic heterosexual men who tested positive for urethral gonorrhoea at a sexual health clinic in Melbourne, Australia

## Authors:

Martín-Sánchez M<sup>1,2</sup>, Ong JJ<sup>1,3</sup>, Fairley CK<sup>1,3</sup>, Chen MY<sup>1,3</sup>, Williamson DA<sup>4</sup>, Maddaford K<sup>1</sup>, Aung ET<sup>1,3</sup>, Carter G<sup>1,3</sup>, Bradshaw CS<sup>1,3</sup>, Chow EPF<sup>1,3,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Alfred Health, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>2</sup> Preventive Medicine and Public Health Training Unit PSMar-UPF-ASPB, Barcelona, Spain

<sup>3</sup> Central Clinical School, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>4</sup> Microbiological Diagnostic Unit Public Health Laboratory, Department of Microbiology and Immunology, The University of Melbourne at The Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>5</sup> Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

## Background:

Asymptomatic screening for gonorrhoea in heterosexual men is currently not recommended in many countries including Australia, given the relatively low prevalence in the heterosexual population. We aimed to determine the proportion of urethral gonorrhoea cases among heterosexual men attending a sexual health clinic that were asymptomatic and symptomatic, the time since last sexual contact to the onset of symptoms and the time to clinic presentation following the onset of symptoms.

## Methods:

This was a cross-sectional study that included heterosexual men aged 16 years or above attending the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre (MSHC) in Australia between August 2017 and August 2018. Gonorrhoea cases were diagnosed by nucleic acid amplification testing (NAAT) and/or culture. Descriptive analyses were conducted for all gonorrhoea cases including demographic characteristics, recent sexual practices, reported urethral symptoms and duration, sexual contact with a person diagnosed with gonorrhoea, investigations performed and laboratory results.

## Results:

There were 116 confirmed cases of urethral gonorrhoea in heterosexual men over the study period of which 6.0% (95% CI: 2.7-12.1%) were asymptomatic. Typical urethral discharge was present in 80.2% (95% CI: 71.9-86.5%) of men. The mean time between last sexual contact and the onset of symptoms was 7.0 days (standard deviation [SD] 5.4, ranging from 1 to 33 days), and between the onset of symptoms to presentation to the clinic was 5.6 days (SD 6.0, ranging from 1 to 30 days).

## Conclusion:

Only a small proportion of heterosexual men with urethral gonorrhoea are asymptomatic. Heterosexual men with urethral symptoms usually seek for healthcare within a week, prompting rapid healthcare-seeking behaviour.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

J.J.O. is supported by an Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Early Career Fellowships (GNT1104781). C.K.F. and C.S.B. are supported by an Australian NHMRC Leadership Investigator Grant (GNT1172900 and GNT1173361, respectively). D.A.W. and E.P.F.C. are supported by an Australian NHMRC Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant (GNT1174555 and GNT1172873, respectively).