



**Joint Australasian Sexual Health and  
HIV&AIDS Conferences  
VIRTUAL**

**Monday 6 - Thursday 9 September, 2021**

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Dear Ivy,

Welcome to Day Two of the [2021 Joint Australasian Sexual Health + HIV&AIDS Conferences](#).

While yesterday's focus was sexual health, today we'll begin to hear more content focused on HIV.. There are some fascinating sessions coming up, including a look back at the last 40 years of living with HIV, how STI screening is impacting antimicrobial resistance, and reducing discrimination in HIV services.

First though, let's look back at some highlights from yesterday's presentations.

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## **Highlights from Day One**

### **Honouring a pioneer of Indigenous health**

While there has been significant change in attitudes and behaviour around sexual health in Indigenous communities, there is still enormous work to be

done both inside and outside of those communities.

The ASRHA Oration from Distinguished Services Award winner Professor James Ward took us on his journey as an infectious diseases epidemiologist and a national leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. He spoke about the difficulties the sector still faces, reflecting on his successes and disappointments, as well as the opportunities and hopes he has for Indigenous sexual health, particularly in remote areas.

Sexual health remains a sensitive and highly stigmatised topic, but with HIV and syphilis still significant issues in remote communities, Professor Ward said the response has to be framed in terms of human rights. That includes tackling the social determinants of health as well as systemic racism within society. Listening to the words of Aboriginal people themselves, such as those within the Uluru Statement, would be an excellent start, he said.

### **Sexual literacy – questions, possibilities, and justice**

We took an in-depth look at **Sexual Literacy** to explore its impacts on teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, sexual abuse prevention, respectful relationships, love, desire and pleasure, STIs and HIV.

In her keynote, Professor Jessica Fields from the University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada, explained what we mean by ‘sexual literacy’ – or more crucially – critical sexual literacy. She argued for the need to understand “the positive and negative impacts of power relations on sex and sexuality” while making room for “the beautiful, dangerous and sublime”.

Engaging with similar topics, a discussion session later in the day looked at how we might encourage and develop sexual literacy through different approaches, as well as hearing about the unique perspectives of trans youth.

That session explored how young people are good at finding the information they need that can help them learn about sex. Apps like TikTok and Instagram can even be useful for young people exploring identity, as they can highlight non-normative bodies and self-representation.

We also heard how “pleasure” — a vital aspect of sexual literacy — is stigmatised, and seems to be missing from most discussions.

## How do STIs present in different populations?

Our morning papers in **Epidemiology, Prevention and Health Promotion** gave us some insights into the manifestation of **STIs in different population groups** with five fascinating presentations in a session chaired by Judith Dean and Jason Asselin.

### Infectious syphilis among women and heterosexual men

Allison Carter from the Kirby Institute, UNSW, sounded the alarm over **increasing syphilis in women and heterosexual men** in Australian cities and the need for enhanced prevention and harm reduction programs.

Notifications have increased from 1,280 in 2009 to 5,078 in 2018.

This represents a changing pattern, as historically the disease has affected urban men who have sex with men, and remote Indigenous communities.

### Syphilis on the rise in gay and bisexual men

There have been increases in syphilis in gay and bisexual men over the past decade, according to the research by Michael Traeger, of Melbourne's Burnet Institute. The team analysed trends in syphilis testing and incidence among gay and bisexual men attending sexual health and GP services in Australia.

Transmission may have been affected by changes in condom use and increased sex following the implementation of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

While syphilis incidence is increasing among all groups of gay and bisexual men, recent increases are most prominent among PrEP users, although it must be noted that it was on the rise in this group before 2016, too.

### Women's STI risk may differ by sexual orientation

Jaimie Engel, from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, is also plugging data gaps in **STI surveillance data for women by sexual orientation**.

Her study found that sexual practices and STI prevalence differed according to sexual orientation. For example, bisexual women reported more sexual

partners than heterosexual women but were more likely to always wear condoms with casual male partners compared to heterosexual women.

### **Telehealth's growing role in abortion and contraceptive care**

The role of telehealth has come sharply into focus during the COVID pandemic, and so it was timely to hear from Cat Kirby of Family Planning Victoria in yesterday's **Abstract Spotlight Session**. Cat presented findings from a study confirming the positive role telehealth can play in ensuring effective provision of abortion and contraceptive care. The strengths of telehealth include the greater convenience and support of a home consultation and increased access for people with limited mobility. But there are still limitations relating to technology, communication barriers, and access to interpreters.

In other papers in the session, Horas Wong of the Kirby Institute provided tips for designing multi-language sexual health surveys, and Ciara Bryan of UTS gave a glimpse into work on a new cell-culture model for studying pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

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## **Coming up today:**

**Looking back at 40 years of HIV, reducing stigma in HIV services, understanding bi+ sexual health needs and more**

We look forward to our three keynote addresses at **today's plenary session**:

First up is David Caron, Professor of French and Women's and Gender Studies, University of Michigan, with a look back at 40 years of the world living with HIV, presenting **What Do I Know? What Can I say? What Should I Do?**

Then, William Miller, from Ohio State University, will take us through Sexual

Health Epidemiology, Prevention & Health Promotion, looking at the effectiveness of interventions without randomised controlled trials.

Chris Kenyon, meanwhile, will address the growing issue of antimicrobial resistance associated with screening for STIs.

We are also excited about our ASHM International session at **6:00pm** where we investigate practical approaches to **reducing stigma and discrimination within HIV services** across the region. Carla Treloar from the Centre for Social Research in Health at UNSW will set the scene.

The **HIV and sexual health needs of bi+ people** come into focus at our **2:00pm** session with panelists Eloise Monteiro from the NAPWHA (National Association of People with HIV Australia), Benjamin Bavinton from the Kirby Institute, Ruby Grant from University of Tasmania, Brian Feinstein from the Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, North Chicago, and Jennifer Power, from La Trobe University.

Finally, we focus on **contraception** in the **live Q&A and discussion** of the **Clinical Management & Therapeutics** session at **4:00 pm**, where our panel will discuss post-partum contraception and IUD insertion, contraception in perimenopause, and contraception after abortion

*All sessions are available to watch on demand in the virtual event portal.*

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## What you're saying on Twitter

It's been great to see how conversations from the conference are unfolding on Twitter. We've been following some particularly interesting conversations around Deb Williamson's presentation on using genome sequencing to **track the spread of STIs and antimicrobial resistance**, and Kari Vallury's presentation on the **Findings from the Australian Abortion Stigma Survey (Proffered paper)**.



**XIMENA TOLOSA**  
@XimenaEpi

The holy grail - incorporating genomic tech in public health #surveillance to improve targeting of #interventions for #gono & #AMR pathogens @drdebwilliamson explained this so clearly!  
#SH2021  
#HIVAIDS2021



**SPHERE**  
@SPHERE\_CRE

Kari Vallury speaking on abortion stigma, misinformation and attitudes @ASHMMedia  
#HIVAIDS2021 #SH2021



12:36 pm · 6 Sep 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

3 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 12 Likes



**Marie Stopes Australia** @mariestopesaus · 4h

Medical abortion/Contraception care via telehealth means:  
-Increased accessibility  
-Increased convenience  
-Enhanced service provision (in conjunction with face to face care).

@CatKirby4 @FPV\_AUS

#HIVAIDS2021 #SH2021 @ASHMMedia



**Marie Stopes Australia** @mariestopesaus · 7h

Reasons for unwanted sexual experience involved more than assault/violence but more nuanced notions (e.g. pleasing a partner).  
#ChristopherFisher from @LTU\_Sex\_Health at the @ASHMMedia  
#HIVAIDS2021 #SH2021 conference.



**Marie Stopes Australia** @mariestopesaus · 4h

#Equitable access to quality IT services is an essential part of being able to expand #telehealth services (for both healthcare providers and healthcare consumers).

@CatKirby4 @FPV\_AUS

#HIVAIDS2021 #SH2021 @ASHMMedia



Join the conversation on Twitter using #HIVAIDS2021 and #SH2021

We'd like to hear what sessions you will be attending and which posters you think are a must-see. If you have a session or poster during the day that you're particularly looking forward to, tweet it out with the hashtags **#HIVAIDS2021** and **#SH2021** to help other delegates find the sessions that interest them.

If you're live tweeting, please use the hashtags so that we can follow and re-tweet you (we'll be tweeting from **@ashmmedia**).

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If you have any questions or technical troubles, contact us at [conference@ashm.org.au](mailto:conference@ashm.org.au) or on **+61 2 8204 0770**.

Have a great and insightful day two at **#HIVAIDS2021** and **#SH2021!**

Cheers,

**Bill & ASHM Conference and Events Team.**

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