

## Access to primary care services for rural consumers who use methamphetamine

Bernadette M Ward<sup>1,2</sup>, Riki Lane<sup>3</sup>, Brendan Quinn<sup>2,4,5</sup>, Grant Russell<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Rural Health, Monash University, Bendigo, Australia*

<sup>2</sup>*Behaviours and Health Risks Program, Burnet Institute, Melbourne, Australia*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of General Practice, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University, Australia*

<sup>4</sup>*Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Australia*

<sup>5</sup>*School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University, Australia*

Presenter's email: [Bernadette.ward@monash.edu](mailto:Bernadette.ward@monash.edu)

**Introduction:** General practice is the most common source of healthcare for people who use methamphetamine. The aim of this study was to explore primary care providers' understandings of access to and service utilisation by this group.

**Method:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with general practitioners, practice nurses and alcohol and other drug service providers from two large towns in rural Victoria.

**Key findings:** Participants reported that availability (workforce shortages, time, complex clinician–client relationships), acceptability (stigma) and appropriateness of care (skill mix, referral networks, models of care) were associated with access to care for this population. Affordability of care was not perceived to be of concern.

**Discussion:** Availability of care is not enough to ensure utilisation and improved health outcomes among consumers who use methamphetamine. Provision of services to this group and to other substance using populations requires the right 'skill mix' across and within healthcare organisations.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** We need to move away from the 'supply' of healthcare alone. Instead, integrated models of primary care are needed to meet the needs of this population; particularly in rural areas.

**Disclosure statement:** The study was funded by the Murray Primary Health Network.