

TELE-TESTING IN THE ACT: A REVIEW OF ASYMPTOMATIC TELEHEALTH TESTING DURING THE ACT COVID-19 LOCKDOWN.

Evans R¹, Woodward S¹, Shuck J¹, Martin S¹

¹Canberra Sexual Health Centre, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

Background/Purpose: During the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) COVID-19 lockdown in August - December 2021, Canberra Sexual Health Centre (CSHC) limited in-clinic appointments to urgent and symptomatic care. Telehealth consultations were offered for sexually transmitted infection (STI) and blood borne virus (BBV) screening for asymptomatic patients.

Approach: New and returning patients who contacted CSHC requesting asymptomatic screening were offered telehealth consultation. A telehealth consultation was booked, and the patient called at the specified time. A consult was conducted over the phone and with patient consent, a pathology pack was posted to their nominated address via Australia Post with the following components:

- An instruction sheet
 - How to collect urine and swab tests
 - Attendance at ACT pathology to deliver self-collected specimens and for venepuncture
- ACT Pathology Centre locations and opening times
- ACT Pathology request form
- Labelled urine jar, throat swab, rectal swab and/or vaginal swab.

Outcomes/Impact:

Tele-testing data was collected from 6 September to 2 December 2021. During this time 801 telehealth appointments were provided to asymptomatic patients (555 returning, 246 new). Testing was completed by 662 (82.6%). 8.5% of patients tested received a positive result for at least one STI. Post testing 325 patients received a satisfaction survey via SMS, with 91 completing the survey (28% response rate). Responses were positive with 84.6% of participants stating that care received via telehealth was comparable with an in-clinic consultation; 94.3% of respondents would recommend tele-testing to others and 91% would use the tele-testing again.

Innovation and Significance:

Tele-testing at CSHC provided a COVID-19 safe alternative for new and returning asymptomatic patients to receive routine STI and BBV screening during COVID lockdown. Tele-testing continues to be offered to asymptomatic patients. As STIs and BBVs commonly have no symptoms, this initiative ensured access to asymptomatic screening during COVID lockdown.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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