

 **hiv&aids+sexualhealth**
2022

Joint Australasian HIV&AIDS and Sexual Health Conferences 2022

29 August - 1 September 2022
Sunshine Coast Convention Centre

As the **Australasian HIV&AIDS and Sexual Health Conferences** continued for its third day, we were once again treated to content spanning the gamut of HIV&AIDS and Sexual Health. Today we bid farewell to the HIV&AIDS portion of the conference, which has delivered an astounding array of valuable content as we continue to delve into themes that shape our public health response.

Day 3 Recap

Opening Plenary

Honouring the extraordinary memory and contributions of the late Levinia Crooks, we began with the announcement of the 2022 *Levinia Crooks Emerging Leader Award* presented by ASHM CEO Alexis Apostolellis to [Dr Skye McGregor](#).

Amongst a competitive group of nominees, Dr McGregor's unique ability to foster partnerships and develop relationships between communities, government and other stakeholders was pivotal in recognising her incredible work as an epidemiologist. Dr McGregor's work continues to inform national policy on STIs and make a genuine difference in the lives of people living with HIV.

To begin our keynote presentations, speaker [Todd Fernando](#) afforded us a thought-provoking insight into the complexity of identity for queer Aboriginal peoples. A proud Wiradjuri man, Todd shared a personal account of the queerphobia that reinforces marginalisation and stressed the need to celebrate queer Aboriginal role models.

Highlighting some of the incredible achievements in HIV over the preceding decades, keynote speaker [Valerie Deliasch](#) began with HIV's most remarkable success story – one where living with HIV has transformed from certain death to being able to live a normal lifespan. Even now, without a vaccine, we have the tools to achieve the 95-95-95 target and elimination. Valerie provided an overview of some critical tools that will continue the push for elimination and stressed the importance of community engagement, innovative models of care, and reaching difficult-to-access people as some of the key tools to achieve elimination.

Can we kill two cocci with one vaccine? Keynote speaker [Helen Marshall](#) covered exciting developments relating to the 4CMenB (meningococcus) vaccine Bexsero, where an early New Zealand study revealed modest effectiveness against the closely related gonococcus bacterium. Utilising data from South Australia's *'B Part of It'* study, it was observed that the incidence of gonorrhoea dropped in populations vaccinated with Bexsero; however, due to low case numbers, it did not reach statistical significance. Helen described the expansion of the study to the NT which has enrolled almost 2,000 participants. It is hoped that the results will add to the emerging evidence that 4CMenB could reduce the incidence of gonorrhoea.

SH Proffered Papers: Epidemiology, Prevention & Health Promotion

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths continue to be disproportionately affected by higher rates of STIs. [Edwin Dyson](#) presented insights from the GOANNA1 & GOANNA2 surveys, which compared data from over 4000 youths between 2011 and 2020, revealing strong relationships between illicit drug use, sexual risk behaviours, and STI diagnosis. The delivery of adjoining sexual health services with drug programs may be advantageous in reducing risk in this population.

There is a paucity of data regarding attitudes and knowledge of BBVs and STIs amongst migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, explained [Daniel Vutich](#). In particular, community engagement and awareness around HIV testing practices, PrEP awareness, and other sexual health matters should be pursued in these communities.

Every nine days, a woman is murdered by her partner - a disheartening statistic shared by [Catherine Brooker](#), who presented the results of a study quantifying the incidence of intimate partner violence (IPV) and reproductive coercion (RC) at a sexual and reproductive health clinic in Perth. The results are nothing short of alarming: more than 1 in 6 women reported having ever experienced IPV or RC. Why wasn't this known earlier? Because we never asked, explained Catherine, and stressed the importance of vigilance and screening amongst clinicians, especially in women's health services.

[Sylvia Kauer](#) explored young people's experiences of school-based relationship and sexuality education (RSE). Overwhelmingly, young people consider RSE to be an essential topic in the school curriculum; however, a large proportion of young people found that RSE content delivered in schools is largely irrelevant – especially young women and those who identify as non-binary and LGBTQ+. This study can potentially guide changes to school-based RSE to target young people. The extensive [report](#) is freely available online, be sure to check it out!

Concerning STI prevention in GBM, [Martin Holt](#) explained that clinicians are mostly unable to recommend STI prevention strategies beyond condoms and safer-sex practices. The results of a survey involving 1,280 GBM demonstrated high levels of acceptability of STI prevention strategies – not only condom use but also novel strategies such as STI-PrEP and STI-PEP.

Expanding Nursing Scope of Practice: Meeting the Changing Needs of Communities

In a session showcasing the variety of nursing and midwifery roles across Australia, a series of engaging speakers talked about advanced practice, which continues to meet the expanding needs of diverse population groups.

'That will never, ever happen. Not in a million years', Shannon Woodward was told as recently as 2018 in relation to Nurse Practitioner S100 prescribing. Now, with an expanding workforce of nurse practitioners (NP) and the ability to prescribe s100 HIV medicines, there is no doubt that NPs have the potential to change the landscape of management of people with HIV. Shannon described the game-changing effects of NP prescribing, which included increased holistic care, less duplication, and increased accessibility to prescribers. She outlined cases where an NP has been able to take on the role of all HIV prescribing in some rural areas which had otherwise minimal access to GPs or other prescribers.

[Lydia Mainey](#) explained that nurses are too often overlooked as experts in their own scope of practice. With stifling, overly conservative policies, nurses are often stripped of autonomy, leaving them unsatisfied in their roles. Lydia urged advocacy for nurses and midwives so that they can fully utilise their skills in the broader healthcare system. Lydia shared an inspiring range of nurses who have been given the opportunity to apply their skills in abortion care, which have contributed to significantly improved patient care across the breadth of abortion, from referral to post-abortion management.

In regional areas, trans and gender-diverse people face far more significant barriers to receiving appropriate care compared to their urban-dwelling counterparts. Kim Grant described doctors changing weekly, no continuity of care, and the minimal number of services as examples of these barriers faced by trans and gender-diverse people seeking appropriate medical and sexual health care. Kim described regional nurse-led holistic care as vital to helping break down these barriers through education and upskilling. It was inspiring to witness the massive difference that such a small and under-resourced team have made in a geographic area larger than Germany and Austria combined. Following from Shannon's presentation, Kim believes there is an urgent need for NPs to fill the gap where GPs are incapable or unwilling in regional areas.

Looking to our New Zealand neighbours, Suzanne Werder described some remarkable initiatives to improve STI testing, follow-up, and access to LARC in Auckland. Successful initiatives tend to be community-focused and partner with organisations like LGOs.

Novel Approaches to Rapid Diagnostics and Characterisation of STIs

Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) technology has great potential in the management of infectious disease, with [Amy Jamison](#) outlining the potential benefits to public health. One of the most significant benefits is the identification of resistant strains of STIs, guiding appropriate intervention management and potentially preventing further resistance. Other advantages of WGS include the ability to identify and characterise clusters. Whilst there is a significant need of widely available WGS and data sharing amongst collaborators, there is a concerning lack of funding and capacity.

We are in the middle of an antibiotic resistance crises, and [Anthony Verderosa](#) presented the unexpected results of antimicrobial properties of cannabidiol (CBD). In early phase 2 studies, it was hypothesised that there may be potential antimicrobial activity of CBD against various bacteria, with further *in-vitro* research confirming modest activity against *N. gonorrhoeae*. Modifications to the CBD molecule show promise in developing new antimicrobial agents, albeit with refinements required in future. In early phase 2 studies, it was hypothesised that there may be potential antimicrobial activity of CBD against various bacteria, with further *in-vitro* research confirming modest activity against *N. gonorrhoeae*. Modifications to the CBD molecule show promise in developing new antimicrobial agents, albeit with refinements required in future.

[Andrew Vallyley](#) explored the challenge of cervical cytology testing in PNG, and how it spurred change to explore methodologies that allow for POC testing for HPV. Andrew described the fortunate series of innovations which allowed self-collecting, rapid testing on using Xpert HPV, and rapid treatment using a thermal ablation device. This three-pronged strategy has proven to be incredibly cost-effective and is set to drastically reduce the incidence of cervical cancer in PNG.

HIV&AIDS Closing Plenary: Farewell & Future

Our HIV&AIDS closing plenary began with celebrating and recognising our award winners.

A special thanks goes out to all authors who contributed to the fantastic array of posters, and thanks to all those who voted!

- Congratulations also to our **Early Career Oral Abstract Presentation Winners**:
- Case Presentation**
Recognition, Diagnosis and Therapeutic Approach to KSHV Inflammatory Cytokine Syndrome (KICS) and KSHV Associated Sequelae
Aadith Ashok
- Discovery & Translational Science**
Evaluation of the Point-Of-Care m-PiMATM HIV-1/2 Viral Load Assay to Support Public Health Responses for Infants and Children Living with HIV in Papua New Guinea
Michael Palmer
- Clinical Management & Therapeutics**
Accelerating the Uptake of Innovative Approaches for the Detection and Monitoring of HIV in Papua New Guinea (ACTUP-PNG) – The Case HIV Exposed Infants and Children Living with HIV
Janet Gare
- Prevention, Epidemiology and Health Promotion**
nPEP Prescriptions Pre- and Post- Introduction of PrEP, and the Changing Characteristics of Those Accessing it: Findings From a Sexual Health Clinic in Melbourne, Australia, 2011-2021
Ranjit Samra
- Social, Political and Cultural Aspects**
Lessons From The Archive: Queer Indonesia Archive and Collecting, Preserving and Exhibiting Queer HIV Histories Within Indonesia
Beau Newham

As Australasia's leading HIV conference comes to an end, we shift our focus to 2023, when the world's largest HIV science conference is coming down under to Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre from 23-26 July 2023.

Hosted by the International AIDS Society, the 12th IAS Conference on HIV Science ([IAS 2023](#)) is the world's most influential meeting on HIV research and its applications. This biennial conference presents the critical advances in basic, clinical, and operational HIV research that move science into policy and practice and will provide an opportunity to showcase Australia's world-leading HIV response and to shine a spotlight on the unique strengths and challenges of the HIV response in the Asia and Pacific region.

Introduced by [Professor Sharon Lewin](#), the newly appointed President of the IAS, ASHMs HIV&AIDS 2022 closing plenary delivered a sector-wide discussion detailing a Road Map to Brisbane 2023.

What to look forward to today

Grab a coffee, pick a theme, and join one of the many proffered paper sessions beginning at 9:00 AM, where you'll again be spoiled for choice with 24 speakers to choose from.

Don't miss the spotlight session commencing at 11:00 AM, where some of the top-ranking sexual health abstracts will be covered, starting with Heather McCormack's 'Laugh the Shame Away' outlining how a *Take Blakton* strengths-based approach to Aboriginal sexual health is making a difference in the community.

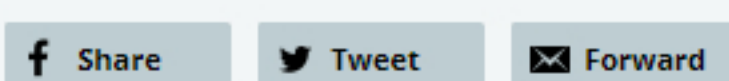
Our closing session beginning at 3:30 PM is not to be missed, with an update on the Australian STI Management Guidelines by Nicholas Medland and an opportunity for Q&A in a panel discussion facilitated by Jennifer Power and Anthony K.J. Smith focusing on the mobilisation of a monkeypox response in Australia.

Poster Tours

While enjoying some lunch, don't forget to attend the Sexual Health poster tour commencing at 12:45 PM. The people's choice award for the best poster will be announced in the closing plenary – be sure to vote on the conference app!

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ASHM Conference & Events Division
Level 3, 160 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
T: +61 2 8204 0770 F: +61 2 8204 0782 E: conference@ashm.org.au

We acknowledge that ASHM offices are located on the land of the Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation (Sydney Office) and the Turrbal and Jagera/Yuggera peoples (Brisbane Office) who are the Traditional Owners of the lands where both offices are situated. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.