

# REORIENTATING NON-CLINICAL SERVICE TO ADDRESS HIV TESTING BARRIERS IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

## Authors:

*DAILEY, B<sup>1</sup>, ROMERO, A<sup>1</sup>, KAO, S<sup>1</sup>, SHEILS, S<sup>2</sup>, PRITCHARD-JONES, J<sup>2</sup>, TEMPLETON, D<sup>3</sup>, MURRAY, C<sup>4</sup>, MCNULTY, A<sup>5</sup>, CARRINGTON, N<sup>4,5</sup>, CUNNINGHAM, P<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> *Sydney Local Health District HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit, Sydney*

<sup>2</sup> *Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Gastroenterology and Liver Centre, Sydney*

<sup>3</sup> *Sydney Local Health District Sexual Health Medicine and Sexual Assault Medical Service, Sydney*

<sup>4</sup> *NSW Ministry of Health, Sydney*

<sup>5</sup> *Sydney Sexual Health Centre, Sydney*

<sup>6</sup> *NSW State Reference Laboratory for HIV, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney Australia*

## Background/Purpose:

Dried Blood Spot (DBS), a free, confidential finger prick test for HIV and HCV, is a research program led by the NSW Ministry of Health, St Vincent's Hospital Network and Sexual Health InfoLink. Historically, DBS testing was only offered by clinical services in Sydney Local Health District (SLHD). Barriers to uptake, include Medicare card provision and SLHD electronic Medical Record creation, an internal clinical governance requirement for SLHD clinical services.

## Approach:

In April 2020, SLHD HIV and Related Program (HARP) Unit, a non-clinical service, became an independent DBS site, aiming to address these barriers and increase uptake of DBS in community settings.

Partnering with local non-government organisations (NGOs) to host DBS events has allowed opportunistic in an outreach capacity. Ongoing mentoring and clinical governance provided by RPA Sexual Health Clinic and RPA Gastroenterology & Liver Services has been essential.

## Outcomes/Impact:

Since becoming a site, the SLHD HARP Unit has piloted this outreach model in a range of settings (community centres, pharmacies and social housing sites), performing over 70 tests. Approximately half of those tested were unable to, or did not consent, to providing Medicare details. Ongoing refinement of the model and capacity building of Health Promotion Officers (HPOs) has demonstrated the agility of the workforce. Pursuing this opportunity has further strengthened the partnerships with internal clinical partners. Anecdotally, community members and stakeholders alike have commended the model, in particular accessibility for those who are at-risk of HIV and for normalising HIV testing.

## Innovation and Significance:

Up skilling a non-clinical workforce to perform DBS demonstrates alignment with the NSW HIV Strategy 2021-2025 in particular, normalising HIV testing and addressing barriers to testing. Embracing novel HIV testing options; coupled with an agile

workforce, is essential for bolstering recent efforts to achieve virtual elimination of HIV in New South Wales.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):**

No conflicts of interest to disclose.