

# SEX ON THE BEACH: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS IN THE PROVISION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA

## Authors:

Leeder JE<sup>1</sup>, Sawleshwarkar S<sup>2</sup>, Harrison C<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney

<sup>2</sup> Sydney Medical School, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney

<sup>3</sup> Menzies Centre for Health Policy and Economics, Sydney School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney

## Background:

Sexual health care is mostly provided by General Practitioners (GPs) in Australia. We aimed to determine the management rate for seven components of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) (STI testing, STI management, contraception, pregnancy testing, natal care, sexual dysfunction, and pap smears) and the effect of patient and demographic factors on the likelihood of testing for and management of STIs.

## Methods:

The Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) program was a national survey of GP clinical activity. BEACH data from April 2000-March 2016 were analysed. The management rates over the study period were calculated for each SRH component. GP and patient characteristic specific management rates of STI testing and management were calculated for two time periods, 2000-2008 and 2008-2016. A regression analysis was then used to determine independent predictors of STI testing and management.

## Results:

15,681 GPs recorded details on 1,568,100 encounters. 7.4% of GP-patient encounters featured at least one SRH concern. Between 2000-2008 and 2008-2016, the rate of STI testing increased significantly (8.0 (95% CI: 7.7-8.4) to 10.5 (95% CI:10.1-10.9) per 1,000 encounters), while there was no commensurate rise in the rate of STI management (3.7 (3.3-4.1) to 3.7 (3.4-4.0)). Predictors for STI testing and management included: female GPs, younger GPs, urban GPs, younger patients, English speaking patients, socioeconomically-advantaged patients, and Indigenous patients.

## Conclusion:

Whilst STI testing rates in general practice increased between 2000-2016, STI management rates stagnated. The results of this study demonstrate that targeted education and training in the management of STIs among GPs is required with a focus on: older GPs, male GPs, and those from rural locations.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None.