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# ARE AUSTRALIAN APPROACHES FOR PARTNER NOTIFICATION FEASIBLE FOR THE CHILEAN CONTEXT?

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## Introduction

Partner Notification (PN) in the Australian context has been studied and improved over previous decades.

International researchers have highlighted a promising future for the use of new technology for PN (1, 2); however, more research is needed to overcome concerns about these strategies and how they can be optimised.(3,4)

In Chile, PN is a strategy that needs more attention. We aim to explore clinicians' perspectives about the use of specialised websites, such as Australia's *Let Them Know*®, and professional counselling support to facilitate PN in the Chilean context.



## Methods

Semi-structured interviews were used to understand participants' views about PN as part of a larger qualitative study undertaken at local health services in Chile to explore PN for syphilis cases.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, transcribed verbatim and translated from Spanish to English for thematic analysis, which followed an inductive approach based on grounded theory because PN has not been studied in-depth in this country.

## Results

In total, ten healthcare providers (HCP) who are working at Primary Health Centres (4) and sexual health units located at regional hospitals (6) in Chile were interviewed. The majority of them have more than five years experience of working with STI patients.

### Theme 1: Perception of new technology

Participants were unaware of the use of new technologies for PN, demonstrating a high interest.

*"I had never thought about it, but I do not know if it would lead to (patients) not believing..." (HCP/C1)*

*"... I think it would be a very good idea and a very good strategy, but I think clinicians should be in charge..." (HCP 1D/1)*

### Theme 2: Use of new technology in the Chilean context

The majority of them agreed that it could be a feasible strategy considering the high use of the Internet in Chile.

*"I think so... I mean... imagine how powerful it has been WhatsApp@..." (HCP 1D/1)*

*"I think that the use of technology is already crowded, especially the use of phones, so it could help to spread information but this requires a massive promotion..." (HCP/C2)*

### Theme 3: HCP Concerns

Participants' primary concerns around this approach were about confidentiality, privacy and efficacy, considering the cultural background of Chilean people.

*"... It can lead to other situations; I do not know. This should be done carefully, it might not be bad, we should try it, perhaps it should be done as a project first, here in Chile..." (HCP/C1)*

*"For contact tracing, I do not know whether they (new technologies) will have a good impact or not because of the impression that the population has about STIs, they remain as taboo. It could be that after a while, the use of them could break the barriers..." (HCP/3C)*

### Theme 4: Alternative support for PN

The creation of a counsellor position for professional support and guidelines would be essential to strengthen this strategy in this country.

*"First, I think that, as clinicians, we need to have more active participation in searching (for) contacts..."*

*"... Having perhaps a specialised person locally or at the health service level, which is in regular contact with clinical teams to effectively discuss how to address difficult cases..." (HCP 1D/1)*

## Conclusions

PN is a strategy that needs more information from the Chilean context. According to HCP perspectives, the use of new technologies for contacting sexual partners with professional counselling support could be an alternative to explore. However, it is essential to understand the current situation to develop local interventions that could follow the Australian approach.

## Literature cited

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