“It opened my eyes” – GPs’ opinions on the Australian Chlamydia Control Effectiveness Pilot (ACCEPt)

Young A1, Hocking J2, Vaisey A2, Lorch R3, Guy R1, Fairley CK4,5, Smith K3, Donovan B3,6, Imrie J1, Gunn J7, and Temple-Smith M8 on behalf of the ACCEPt Consortium
1School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales; 2Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne; 3The Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales; 4Melbourne Sexual Health Centre; 5Central Clinical School, Monash University; 6Sydney Sexual Health Centre; 7Centre for Sexual Health and HIV Research, University College London; 8General Practice and Primary Health Care Academic Centre, University of Melbourne;

Background: Many barriers prevent GPs from testing young people for chlamydia, but it is unclear which facilitators are the most effective at increasing testing.

Aim: To determine which components of the ACCEPt intervention had the most effect on changing a GP’s approach to chlamydia testing

Methods:
- ACCEPt is a cluster RCT investigating the impact of annual chlamydia testing of 16 to 29 year old men and women on the burden of chlamydia in the population.
- GPs in the intervention arm received regular feedback, financial incentives, education resources, visual media and computer alerts to facilitate increased testing.
- Semi-structured telephone interviews with a sample of GPs were conducted at recruitment (prior to randomisation) to determine their attitudes to chlamydia testing. A sample of those in the intervention group were interviewed after at least 6-12 months of intervention (midpoint) to investigate their opinions of ACCEPt and the facilitators to testing.
- GPs were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation of clinic size, location, gender and age of GP.
- Interviews were transcribed, then coded in NVivo™ for major themes by two researchers (AY and MTS)

Results: Circumstances in offering a test
At Recruitment:
- GPs reported testing mostly based on symptoms and patient request despite recognizing that chlamydia was a problem in young people.
- Barriers to testing included lack of time and heavy workload, lack of resources and lack of awareness of risk in patients.

At Midpoint:
I think what it changed is the age group, that opened my eyes. Without ACCEPt, I would still do anyone coming in with an infection but it did open my eyes, just look at the age group. – Midpoint GP 30

- Over half reported testing based on age rather than sexual risk
Yeah, it [my comfort level] has certainly increased and I have been able to have that discussion more quickly. – Midpoint GP 42

- Tests were being offered opportunistically, and more quickly than expected.
- Confidence and comfort had increased with repetition, particularly in non-sexual health-related consultations

Knowing some of the figures for the local town actually helped. In that I can say, “You know we have this ridiculously high rate of chlamydia and we are trying to get it down so I am trying to test everybody”. So they can kind of feel that they are not being singled out as someone that I feel is at high risk as well. – Midpoint GP 14

- Testing was easier with knowledge of local prevalence, increased education and with language using age as the basis for a test

I think the feedback is important because it shows you’re on track but I think having an actual person there makes it more powerful. I think you get a lot of information on new stuff you are supposed to be doing as a doctor and actually having someone who is willing to sit down with you and go, “I understand it is tricky, what can I do to help?” – Midpoint GP 41

- Feedback was the most effective component, however this was strongly tied to a visit from the research officer. Many GPs commented that the opportunity to discuss testing enhanced the usefulness of the feedback.

Conclusions: GPs report that ACCEPt has been effective at facilitating testing in general practice with the use of feedback, financial incentives, education resources, visual media and computer alerts. ACCEPt has been able to shift GP thinking from testing only symptomatic patients to testing based on age. Feedback plus a visit from the research officer emerged as the most useful facilitator.

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ACCEPt Consortium and Investigators: A/Prof Jane Hocking, Prof Christopher Fairley, Prof Jane Gunn, Prof Basil Donovan, Prof John Kaldor, Prof Nicola Low, Prof Matthew Law, A/Prof Meredith Temple-Smith, A/Prof Rebecca Guy, Mr James Ward, Dr David Regan, A/Prof David Wilson, Prof John Imrie, Prof Rob Carter, Prof Marjan Fito, Prof Anne Mitchell, A/Prof Marjan Szelke, A/Prof Dorota Sztajzel, A/Prof Lane Sams, A/Prof Marie Presta, A/Prof Sophie Talja, A/Prof Marcus Chen, Prof Margaret Hocking

For further information: ayoung@unimelb.edu.au or www.accep.org.au