



GENERAL PRACTITIONER'S ACCESS TO SEXUAL HEALTH CLINICS AND SEXUAL HEALTH ONLINE RESOURCES: A Nepean and Blue Mountains Perspective

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BACKGROUND

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District (NBMLHD) has two sexual health clinics (SHC) located in Katoomba and Penrith. The SHC provide health services to a diverse urban and rural population within a large geographical area, containing over 200 general practice (GP) centres. In 2016, GPs accounted for 16.0% of all new patient referrals to both SHC.

We developed a survey to assess GP awareness of and referral to the SHC, online sexual health resources and the Sexual Health Information Link (SHIL).

LOCAL SEXUAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

Australian STI Management Guidelines for Use in Primary Care - [Sydney Sexual Health Centre](#)

STI Clinical Management - [NSW STIPU](#) Management Guidelines for use in

Primary Care - [ASHA](#)

STI Policies and Guidelines – [ASHM](#)

SHIL

A telephone and internet based information service funded by the NSW Ministry of Health. It provides HIV and STI risk assessment and management options, with an aim to deliver accurate information, referral services and specialist support.

THERAPEUTIC GUIDELINES

eTG complete is a leading source of treatment advice for a wide range of clinical conditions. Recognised as being accurate, independent and practical, it includes explicit instructions for therapy, assisting practitioners in making appropriate and optimum treatment decisions.

DEMOGRAPHIC

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District provides community and hospital healthcare for the population living in the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith Local Government Areas (LGAs) and residents of the Greater Western Region.

NBMLHD consists of both urban and semi-rural areas, covering approximately 9,179 square kilometres. Having an estimated resident population of almost 350,000 people.

The Dharug, Gundungurra and Wiradjuri people are acknowledged as the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land in our District.



METHODS

In March 2016, 290 surveys were faxed to 106 medical centres within a 10 kilometre radius of each SHC. Surveys were returned by fax over a two month period.

RESULTS

- In total **81/290** (27.9%) were returned. Blue Mountains GPs returning the bulk of responses compared to Nepean GPs.
- Online resources were accessed by **47/81** (58.0%) of GPs, with the majority using Therapeutic Guidelines (eTG).
- Other resources included Australian STI Management Guidelines, RACGP web site, STIPU website and BMJ Best Practice.
- Only **13/81** (16.0%) of responders were aware of SHIL and only **6/81** (7.4%) had used the service.
- **60/81** (74.1%) had referred patients to a SHC (Nepean Blue Mountains or Western Sydney).
- The majority of respondents (70.0%) were interested in the development of education programs with their local SHC.

CONCLUSION

GPs were well aware of online resources and accessed these resources. Therapeutic Guidelines was the preferred online service. GPs would like direct education by their local SHC and knowledge of the SHC preferred sources of STI information. The higher proportion of responses from Blue Mountains GPs may be due to higher levels of promotion provided by the Blue Mountains SHC in comparison to the Nepean SHC.

FOLLOW UP

In response to the survey, the clinic is developing a sexual health teaching weekend in 2017 for Penrith GPs, regular teaching sessions organised through the Nepean Medical Association and attending GP forums.