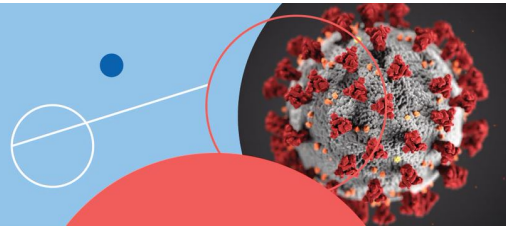


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taskforce on bbvs
sexual health and covid-19



Sexual Health Workforce Bulletin

Love in the time of COVID-19

17 April 2020

Welcome to the inaugural Sexual Health Workforce Bulletin. These bulletins will aim to provide Australia's sexual health workforce with information on changes in clinical practice, health service innovation, medical education, emerging research and useful resources.

This fortnight's bulletin contains updates on telehealth and other innovations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Updates from several sexual and reproductive health services operating in different parts of Australia highlight our sector's dedication to promoting ongoing equitable access to sexual and reproductive health services during these unusual times.

This bulletin also celebrates the launch of ACON's TransHub, a new online resource for trans and gender diverse people and their supporters. This resource was developed through collaboration between community members, community organisations, and clinicians, and should be a useful resource for your trans and gender diverse patients.

The bulletin has been developed by the ASHM Sexual Health Program with expert input by members of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine (AChSHM) and the Taskforce on BBV's, sexual health and COVID-19.

We are grateful for the sector's support and enthusiasm for this bulletin. Please distribute this bulletin through your networks. We welcome submissions for future editions of this bulletin from any individuals or organisations working in sexual health, by emailing sexualhealth@ashm.org.au

Stay safe and well,

Dr Vincent Cornelisse
ASHM Clinical Advisor
Medical Unit Manager and Staff Specialist
Kirketon Road Centre

Telehealth numbers — a message from the RACP AChSHM

As of the 30th March, sexual health physicians can use the COVID-19 telehealth and telephone numbers specifically set up for the response to the pandemic. If you are a **Fellow of the Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine** the

consultant physician item numbers are available to you to use. See page 10 of 15 in the attached Fact sheet - double asterisk** at the bottom of the page. The **RATE** ie the **dollars attached** to the SH Item numbers are the same number of dollars that a consultant physician who uses Items 110, 116, 119, 132 and 133 can charge, therefore you can use the COVID items under consultant physician services. For face to face consultation please continue to use the Sexual Health Medicine Item numbers as usual.

For more information please view the attached PDF [here](#) , PDF [here](#) and visit www.mbsonline.gov.au



Marie Stopes Australia — Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Australia during COVID-19

Access to contraceptive and abortion care in Australian health settings was sporadic prior to the pandemic, and particularly limited in public health settings. Today Australia faces unprecedented barriers to sexual and reproductive healthcare.

Extrapolating from comparable situations and evidence, the rate of unplanned pregnancies in Australia will increase. The changing nature of intimate and household relationships will result in increased sexual contact. Contraception and emergency contraception will be less accessible and thus the rate of unprotected sexual activity will increase.

Marie Stopes Australia has developed a Situational Report to update key stakeholders about the current issues we are witnessing in contraceptive and abortion access in Australia. The document proposes a number of detailed recommendations, including to review legislation and policy, evolve models of care, maintain people's health rights and make healthcare more affordable.

Throughout the pandemic, the most recent version will be online at this same link: <https://resources.mariestopes.org.au/SRHRinAustralia.pdf>. The report invites organisations and individuals to consider opportunities for collaboration and action.



COVID-19 Online Education for Sexual and Reproductive Health

Author: Dr Ching Kay Li

Academic Registrar, SPHERE & Department of General Practice at Monash University

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the health workforce worldwide to new ways of providing care, including sexual and reproductive health. Here is a list of selected resources providing perspectives.

1. For clinicians

The Australian Department of Health promoted a 30-minute course for care workers across all healthcare settings, which has an overview of COVID-19, safety measures and busted myths. Available [here](#)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) published free courses including operational strategies, infection control, and clinical care for COVID-19. Available [here](#)

The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) produced a contingency plan for a controlled, triaged approach in sexual health services. Available [here](#)

Another course also by WHO targets intimate partner and sexual violence prevention with sections on family and child welfare. Available [here](#)

Stanford University has a free *International Women's Health and Human Rights* course, covering education, genital mutilation, reproductive health and sex trafficking. Available [here](#)

2. For the public

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine offered an online course *COVID-19: Tackling the novel coronavirus* to help the public understand the COVID-19 and public health measures. Available [here](#)

The Sexual Health Quarters (Western Australia), American Sexual Health Association and New York City have online posts informing the public about safe home-based sexual activities and contraception. Available [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)

SHINE SA — Gender Connect Country SA

SHINE SA's Gender Connect Country SA is a FREE service that provides confidential support from peer workers with lived experience of gender diversity. This is a supportive, peer-led phone service for those who are living in Country SA and identify as transgender, gender diverse, or are questioning their identity. We are also here to help those who support gender diverse people, such as family members, teachers, or healthcare workers.

Our team is made up of a diverse group of folks with lived experience in being transgender or gender diverse, and our aim is to support people with similar experiences. Those wanting to contact us can ring us, email us, or organise a wellbeing check through the intake form on our website.

We are here to support, and are particularly aware that many transgender people may be feeling extra vulnerable and stressed right now with the COVID-19 health concerns. You can call 08 7099 5390, Monday – Thursday, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm. For more information visit: www.shinesa.org.au/gender-connect/



An update from Family Planning NSW

Family Planning NSW clinics are **open** and ready to help you with all your reproductive and sexual healthcare needs.

Each Family Planning NSW clinic offers a range of reproductive and sexual health services. These services include contraception information, contraceptive procedures (IUD and Implanon), pregnancy options including early abortion, STI testing and management, advice regarding management of menopause symptoms, and more.

In line with current NSW Health recommendations, we have infection control practices to ensure your safety and that of our staff, and are practicing social distancing in all our facilities. If you are unwell, have travelled outside of

Australia in the past 14 days, have had close contact with someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) and need to reschedule your appointment, please contact our reception staff to do so.

Gap fees apply to our consultations — please click [here](#) for more information.

<https://www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics>

To address the social distancing requirements of COVID-19 for course participants and staff, all **Family Planning NSW face-to-face education courses** are being rescheduled for a later date. Family Planning NSW is adapting many education courses to online delivery. Education Services Update: <https://www.fpnsw.org.au/education-training>

Family Planning NSW launches telehealth

Family Planning NSW recognises that reproductive and sexual healthcare is personal, time-sensitive and absolutely necessary.

In addition to our face-to-face clinical appointments, Family Planning NSW has launched a telehealth service to ensure ongoing access to essential reproductive and sexual health services. Services that are now available over the phone include contraception, pregnancy options counselling, asymptomatic STI screening, medical abortion and gynaecological problems, including menstrual issues and menopause symptoms. The organisation is committed to continue providing best practice, expert healthcare. We do this in line with recommended infection control and social distancing practices.

Telehealth services are an important addition to meeting the needs of people who cannot attend a clinic and who live in rural and remote areas. The telehealth service also means that GPs and other healthcare workers who may not have capacity for reproductive and sexual health consultations can refer their clients to FPNSW services. To arrange a telehealth consultation, people can call their local FPNSW clinic to organise an appointment time. For contact details and further information, visit the FPNSW website here: <https://www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics>



The new face of  + 

Changes and innovation at the Bolton Clarke HIV Program/Homeless Persons Program

Elizabeth Crock, a HIV CNC who works at Bolton Clarke HIV Program/Homeless Persons Program has provided an update of service changes and innovations since the start of the pandemic.

The Bolton Clarke HIV Program/Homeless Persons Program covers Melbourne and Mornington Peninsula and is integrated with Thorne Harbour Health (THH) HIV Services. The service has ~200 clients living with HIV, including long term survivors, people experiencing homelessness, people without Medicare, those newly diagnosed, refugees.

Summary of changes, innovations

- Referrals to our service continue, admissions are being triaged by the two regional CNCs.
- A screening tool/self-assessment checklist is available for staff to screen clients/new referrals for travel, contacts, COVID-19 symptoms.
- We have reduced face-to-face contact but are continuing to make essential home visits.
- Regular phone calls to all clients (especially mental health support) and can help facilitate telehealth for clients with doctors

- We are no longer transporting clients in our cars but can provide taxi vouchers to them. If necessary, THH volunteers will transport some clients in consultation with the CNCs
- We have developed a COVID-19 plan for every client to ensure continuity of care should staff be unable to visit. This includes ensuring adequate medication supplies and adherence support strategies.
- We provide education on COVID-19 to people whose first language is not English with interpreters and written information where available
- Group events (drop-in lunches, pantry) have been suspended. We are continuing to assist with food security/food drops through THH.
- Bolton Clarke has advocated successfully for accommodation for homeless people who may need to self-isolate or quarantine.
- Classroom HIV education for staff has been suspended; we are developing on-line alternatives.
- A new HIV assessment tool (including Quality of Life tool) is under trial — this will be useful later for research and evaluation.

The attached PDF [here](#) contains Information about Centrelink & Superannuation Benefits for People Experiencing Homelessness, Disability, Hardship, Unemployment & Imprisonment



Sexual Health Quarters

In response to COVID-19, SHQ (Sexual Health Quarters) has moved all initial clinic consultations (appointment and drop-in) to being undertaken over the phone, and is only seeing urgent clients face-to-face (eg symptomatic, IUD problem, urgent LARC). Interpreters are also being used via three-way calls as needed.

An externally located pick-up point has been designated for pathology, with an instruction sheet developed for clients to take their own swabs where possible. This operates daily, with staff and clients adapting quickly.

Where possible, SHQ doctors are now offering telehealth consults from home, sending scripts via post/fax — while taking almost as long as face-to-face consults, this is also working well.

Frontline staff have a brief 'stand-up' meeting each morning to go over any changes/challenges to service delivery, and clinicians are utilizing Zoom to meet. SHQ counselling services have also moved to a phone consultation model.

SHQ has taken the opportunity to launch a new online STI module intended to provide primary health care professionals with comprehensive education about discussing, testing and managing STIs. Register here <https://shq.org.au/course/stis-in-wa-primary-care/#registration>



Queensland Positive People

How Queensland Positive People has adapted its services during the COVID-19

pandemic

QPP continues to provide social connection, support and services to our communities.

While we have temporarily changed the way we deliver some of our services; our peer navigators, case managers and peer testers continue to provide practical assistance to people living with HIV by phone/text, online format such as video or online chat and in person for essential support and testing.

Our peer navigators and case managers provide support with:

- Social connection (On-line social gatherings are coming)
- Social and emotional support with COVID-19 and HIV.
- Health navigation with HIV diagnosis, treatment and care.
- Accessing medications, clinical services, food, housing and other essential support services including mental health.
- Information and support with stigma, discrimination, migration and the law.

- Emergency relief funding for access to medications, clinical services, food, housing and other essential items. This includes PLHIV who are Medicare ineligible and/or affected by COVID-19 travel restrictions

The RAPID HIV/STI testing clinic in Brisbane remains open at this stage with additional triage protocols in place — although outreach clinics have been suspended. We are exploring alternative HIV/STI testing models including: online ordering of HIV self-testing kits and phone helpline; and a system for dropping off self-collected specimens for chlamydia and gonorrhoea testing with GeneXpert. Please visit the [QPP](#) and [RAPID](#) websites or free call on 1800 636 241.



ACON launches TransHub

To mark Trans Day of Visibility on Tuesday 31 March, ACON launched a new online platform: TransHub! An exciting digital information and resource destination for all trans and gender diverse (TGD) people, loved ones, allies and health providers. Central to TransHub is person-centred, human rights focussed information about social, medical and legal gender affirmation, and other key health issues for TGD people. TransHub also offers information specific to COVID-19 for TGD people.

TransHub's allies section provides information to partners, friends, employers, educators and colleagues, and the clinicians section addresses creating welcoming environments, gender affirming hormones, surgical interventions and providing patient-centred care. The site also includes a comprehensive language guide, and a portal to access the resources available throughout the website. ACON's Manager, Trans & Gender Diverse Health Equity, Teddy Cook said: "It was important to us that we collaborated with as many different trans people as possible and have proudly consulted, created opportunities for, commissioned and supported hundreds of community members to bring

TransHub to life, we also partnered with a number of leading specialist organisations and clinicians to ensure TransHub is accurate, evidence-based and accessible for those who will benefit from using it.”

You can access TransHub [here](#).

LARC access during the COVID-19 pandemic

A position statement from SHINE SA, Family Planning Victoria, TRUE relationships & reproductive health, SHFPACT, Family Planning NT, Sexual Health Quarters and Family Planning Tasmania. View it [here](#).

How to take a throat swab

This poster is an excellent visual guide that can be shared with patients for those who have moved to self-collected swabs. You can download it [here](#).

Saac Covid19 Access to Abortions Fact Sheet

The South Australian Abortion Access Coalition has released a fact sheet on COVID-19 and access to abortion in South Australia. View it [here](#).

Upcoming Education and Training

[ASHM Training calendar](#)

[Family Planning NSW](#)

[Children by Choice](#)

[Sexual Health Quarters](#)

[ShineSA](#)

Quick Links

[Childrenbychoice newsletter](#)

[Scarlet Alliance's current statement of impact](#)

[COVID-19 – Marie Stopes operations](#)

[Corona Virus Symptom Checker](#)

[Safe Sex in the time of coronavirus](#)

[How the RACP supporting you](#)

[Taskforce on BBV's, sexual health and COVID-19](#)

[RACGP COVID-19](#)

[Centring sexual and reproductive health and justice in the global COVID-19 response](#)

[RANZCOG](#)

[Webinar invitation: Addressing Antimicrobial Resistance in Gonorrhoea](#)

Please forward this bulletin to your networks. We welcome submissions for future editions of this bulletin from any individuals or organisations working in sexual health. Please email sexualhealth@ashm.org.au.



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Developing a sustainable HIV,
viral hepatitis and sexual health
workforce for 30 years.

Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis
and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM)

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CIRCULATION INFORMATION

ASHM is a peak professional society representing a multidisciplinary health workforce in HIV, viral hepatitis and sexual health. We have a membership of over 3500 and almost 60 organisational members providing reach to a large majority of health care worker activity involved in the sector.

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