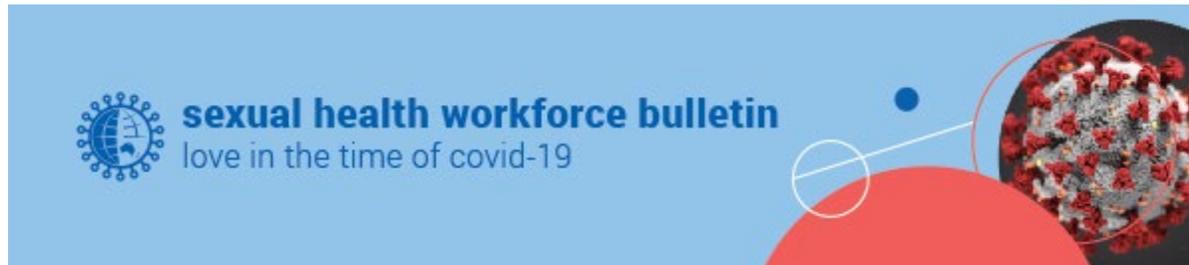


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[A project of the Taskforce on BBVs, Sexual Health and COVID-19](#)

Sexual Health Workforce Bulletin

Love in the time of COVID-19 #6

20 July 2020

Was this email forwarded to you? Email sexualhealth@ashm.org.au to sign up

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

This edition includes links to several exciting research projects which have been developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One such study is from the [Kirby Institute](#) who are monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on Australian gay and bisexual men's ongoing risk of HIV and sexual and mental health; another is the second survey from the [University of Melbourne's Sexual Health Unit](#) on the COVID-19 Impact on Sexual and Reproductive Health. Please consider distributing these links throughout your networks and to your patients.

Also included in this edition is [Family Planning Victoria's](#) new sexual and reproductive health resource for international students which was developed in a bid to overcome the social and structural barriers facing international students in Australia, and a compilation of articles from the ASHM Taskforce on BBVs, Sexual Health and COVID-19 on [Women's Health and COVID-19](#).

As you will aware, the Australian Government acted swiftly to broaden the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) to support expanded telehealth services during COVID-19 and these changes have been critical in supporting patients to access sexual and reproductive health services during the pandemic. However the recently announced changes,

due to come into effect on 20th July, will significantly impact on timely, affordable access to sexual and reproductive health services across Australia. The Australian sexual and reproductive health sector is calling on the Federal Government to exempt specialist services from these planned changes.

[Marie Stopes Australia and ASHM](#) have launched an open letter to Minister Greg Hunt and are calling on sexual and reproductive health providers to sign the letter online; [click here to read the letter](#), and scroll to the bottom to add your signature. Allied health professionals and the community can also support a national petition launched by [SPHERE](#), the Centre for Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health.

We urge you to sign both the open letter and petition and advocate for exemptions to time bound services such as the medical termination of pregnancy, STI testing, BBV consultations, and PrEP and PEP for HIV prevention.

The bulletin also includes:

- [Links to relevant webinars, podcasts and recordings](#)
- [Education on offer from ASHM and other training providers](#)
- [News and research](#)
- [Useful resources for the workforce](#)

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 BBVs, Sexual Health and COVID-19.

We hope that you are finding this bulletin useful, and are keen to receive your submissions and ideas for future editions (please email these to sexualhealth@ashm.org.au). Please distribute this bulletin through your networks.

Stay safe and well,

Dr Vincent Cornelisse

ASHM Clinical Advisor

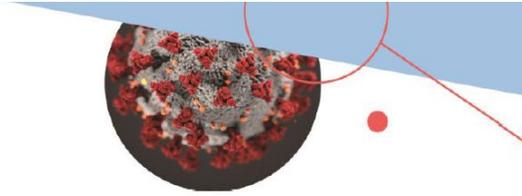
Medical Unit Manager and Staff Specialist, Kirketon Road Centre

&

Jessica Michaels

ASHM Sexual Health Program Manager

[For more information or to subscribe to the bulletin click here](#)



Women's health and COVID-19

This month ASHM's Taskforce on BBVs, sexual health and COVID-19 published a comprehensive article on women's health and COVID-19, covering:

- Access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Pregnancy
- Contraception
- Abortion care
- Sexual and reproductive health, violence and coercion
- Sexually transmissible infections
- Women living with blood borne viruses

...and more. [Click here to read the article](#). Thanks to the many taskforce members who contributed.

Sector updates

These updates were graciously supplied by our colleagues in the workforce. For any questions or commentary please reach out to the organisations listed.



Using telehealth to provide early medical abortion during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: consensus statement and petition

The temporary COVID-19 Medicare Benefit Scheme telehealth item numbers, introduced at the start of the pandemic have made it possible for Australian women (excluding those in South Australia) to receive Medicare funded telehealth early medical abortion (EMA) for the first time. But with these telehealth item numbers currently

under review and with changes to eligibility for these items on the cards, women's access to telehealth EMA is at risk beyond September 2020.

SPHERE's Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health COVID-19 Coalition has issued a consensus statement and petition calling for:

1. MBS telehealth item numbers to continue to be available to all Australian women (including both rural and urban women) for the purpose of accessing EMA via telehealth through Medicare.
2. South Australian state government legislation to be amended to remove the restriction of supply of mifepristone to solely hospital grounds to allow for provision of EMA in primary care and via telehealth.

Read more [here](#), and [click here](#) to sign the petition



Changes to Medicare items for Telehealth consultation

Marie Stopes Australia and ASHM have launched an open letter to Minister Greg Hunt, calling on the Federal Government to exempt specialist services from planned changes to Medicare items for Telehealth consultations. We are calling on sexual and reproductive health providers to sign the letter; [click here to read the letter and sign](#).

Sexual and Reproductive Health, Violence and Coercion during COVID-19

The COVID-19 global pandemic has required countries across the world to respond with strong, unprecedented preventative measures in order to decrease the risk of infection. In the absence of therapeutic measures, the most powerful means of slowing the spread has been strict and far-reaching restrictions on travel and movement. The pandemic has also significantly impacted global economies and placed strain on the mental health and physical health of many people. Within this context, initial trends and analysis from Australia and internationally has indicated that COVID-19 has exacerbated conditions for violence and reproductive coercion. It is important to highlight that COVID-19 is not a direct cause of violence and coercion, rather that restricted movement and isolation should be considered a trigger for first-time and escalating violence and coercion.

Read an extended version of this on [Medium](#)



Family Planning Victoria releases new sexual health resource for international students

Family Planning Victoria has launched a new sexual and reproductive health resource in a bid to overcome the social and structural barriers facing international students in Australia.

Dating in Australia: [Stories from International Students](#) has been developed for international students at Victorian universities and private colleges, primarily for students from China and India. The resource consists of a comprehensive online sexual health education course, accompanied by five friendly, light-hearted, and informative videos discussing: dating; healthy relationships; consent; sexual health and STIs; and pregnancy, contraception and abortion.

The project, funded by Study Melbourne's International Student Welfare Program, aims to benefit students who have limited reproductive and sexual health knowledge and face challenges navigating the Australian healthcare system. It was researched, produced, and delivered by health promotion and education consultant Jenny Walsh for Family Planning Victoria.

Read more [here](#)



Gay and bisexual men wanted for COVID-19 study

Can successes in HIV survive after COVID-19? Are gay and bi men at risk again?

The COVID-19 Diary is a weekly 5-minute diary monitoring changes in gay men's behaviours during the pandemic. The study will:

- Measure the extent of and identify factors for the impact of COVID-19 on sexual, drug using, and health-seeking behaviours and social connectedness among gay and bisexual men.
- Assess the impact of COVID-19 on trends in HIV and other STIs among gay and bisexual men.
- Address issues such as isolation, support, mental health and resilience, income loss, and access to health services.

For every weekly diary completed, participants will go into a raffle for that week's prizes.

Please assist to ensure that eligible gay and bisexual men in Australia (not just NSW) are informed about the study by sharing the [website here](#) and Facebook [page here](#)



Genital Herpes - It is time to break the silence on stigma

Curtin University is calling for participants who live in Australia, are 18 years or over, and have been diagnosed with HSV-1 or HSV-2 genital herpes infection. The study involves a completely anonymous online survey on genital herpes stigma.

Download the [flyer here](#); access the [survey here](#)

Please circulate to your networks and promote to patients.



Introducing 'Lady Peeps'

Queenslanders have done an amazing job avoiding COVID-19 and now a new community spokesperson is asking people to do the same with STIs. True Relationships & Reproductive Health today launches the Lady

Peeps campaign involving rising star, *Lady Peeps*, who encourages people to take control of their sexual health. [Read the full article here](#)

For more information on Lady Peeps and to download her campaign resources, go to: www.ladypeeps.org.au

For further information please contact Harriet Doran Edmunds – Health promotion and education officer at harriet.doranedmunds@true.org.au or on 07 3250 0240.



Trans and Gender Diverse People’s Dating App Use: Sexual Health Factsheet

This factsheet summarises key findings from a series of qualitative workshops and interviews with trans and gender diverse dating app users, including their experiences with health professionals and organisations. Published by the Australian Research Council Linkage Project ‘Safety, Risk and Wellbeing on Digital Dating Apps’.

Access it [here](#).



Quote attributable to CEO Richard Keane:

The team at Living Positive Victoria, at both an operational and governance level, has been working hard to maintain active engagement across our services by adopting a range of on line initiatives and creative approaches to peer engagement. A responsive, collaborative and inclusive relationship with our sector partners has enabled Living Positive Victoria to act pre-emptively in the initial response and devise novel approaches for towards the reallocation of existing resources in response to shifting priorities and address existing gaps in equity across key populations. [Read more here](#)



Department of Rural Health
Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health

Victorian Public Abortion and Contraception Tracker (VPACT) Research Project SURVEY NOW OPEN

A Working Party with membership from over 30 service providers across Victoria was established in March 2020 to monitor the sustainability of the provision of abortion and contraception in the public healthcare system in Victoria throughout COVID-19 public health response. The working party is conducting this online survey.

The survey will be repeated four times throughout 2020. Survey 1 is now open, and you can complete it [here](#).

Webinars and recordings

Register for these upcoming webinars:

- **Sexual and reproductive health update: lessons learned from COVID-19**
This workshop, developed by ASHM in partnership with Marie Stopes Australia, will update General Practitioners on changes in sexual and reproductive health provision and services during the pandemic. Expert speakers will raise awareness around STI testing and treatment, contraception and abortion in a COVID-19 context, and the vital ongoing role GPs play in delivering this care.
Tuesday 8 September, 7:00PM AEST [Register now](#)

Access these recordings:

- **COVID-19: Sexual and reproductive health – What matters now (On-demand webinar)**
This webinar has been developed by RACGP Specific Interests Antenatal and Postnatal Care, Breast Medicine and Sexual Health Medicine. It aims to provide guidance in providing sexual and reproductive health services to your patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will discuss the use of telehealth and in-person consultations and the importance of reassuring patients of the safety of visiting the clinic, while adjusting clinical practices to cater for the pandemic environment.
[Watch here](#). Please note: The webinar will launch on registration, but a link will be sent to you to watch the webinar at any time. Available online until 15 August 2020
- **The COVID-19 Pandemic and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the Pacific**
Panellists discussed challenges for the delivery of sexual and reproductive health care in Pacific Island countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on contraception, the management of unintended pregnancies and gender-based violence. Watch [here](#).
- **Business as usual? Sex work in the COVID-19 environment** Expert speakers debated issues affecting sex workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, including far ranging impacts from loss of income (sex workers are ineligible for job-keeper payments) to stigma and discrimination (sex-workers have received the highest number of social distancing related fines than any other group) and problematic access to health information and sexual health related care. Watch [here](#).
- **Taking stock: COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific - Where are we now and where are we going?**
Reflections on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted across Asia and the Pacific regions and the implications for the aid and development sector, focused on HIV, SRH and BBV services. Watch [here](#).

Conferences



Registration and Abstracts now open

Don't miss out on your opportunity to share your research with the sector in 2020. We encourage abstract submissions for all priority populations and areas of HIV and sexual health and related infections/retroviruses.

Abstract deadline: 16 August 2020

Registration deadline: 9 November 2020

Find out more, register or submit an abstract at <https://hivshconferences2020.com.au/>

Click [here](#) to become an ASHM member to access member registration rates along with the opportunity to connect with an extensive community for information sharing and networking in Australia, New Zealand and across our region.



Save the date for Children by Choice’s Unplanned Pregnancy and Abortion Conference - August 5 and 6 2021 in Brisbane.

For more information or sponsorship opportunities please contact events@childrenbychoice.org.au.

Education

ASHM education:

- [ASHM upcoming training](#)
- [ASHM online learning](#)

Other training providers:

- [Children by Choice](#)
- [Family Planning NSW](#)
- [Sexual Health Quarters](#)
- [ShineSA](#)
- [The Albion Centre](#)
- [True Relationships & Reproductive Health](#)

News and research

- Coronavirus: Australian advice issued on casual sex and COVID-19 ([News.com.au](#), based on [ASHM guidance](#))
- STIs 'could spike' as coronavirus restrictions ease ([Australian Doctor](#) subscriber only content based on the recent [ASHM guidance](#))
- WHO: access to HIV medicines severely impacted by COVID-19 as AIDS response stalls ([WHO](#))
- How koalas with an STD could help humanity ([New York Times](#))
- Information for multicultural communities – coronavirus (COVID-19) ([Queensland Government](#))

Articles and studies included in this section have not been reviewed by the Taskforce, however we endeavour to only include content from reputable sources.

Resources

AHPRA: [Telehealth guidance for health practitioners](#)

ASHM: [Taskforce on BBVs, sexual health and COVID-19](#)

CERSH: [April 2020 News Update \(subscribe to future editions here\)](#)

Marie Stopes Australia:

[Sexual and reproductive health rights in Australia situational report](#) / [Service delivery updates](#)

PositiveLifeNSW: [Getting practical about COVID-19 and HIV](#)

RACGP: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for GPs](#)

RACP: [How the college is supporting you](#)

RANZCOG: [COVID-19 information hub](#)

Scarlet Alliance: [COVID-19 impact and response for sex workers](#)

SPHERE: [SRH and COVID-19 Coalition](#)

SRHM: [Collection of papers on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the era of COVID-19](#)

Call for contributions

We are now calling for submissions for the next edition of this bulletin. Below are some examples of the type of content we would like to include in the bulletin, relating to sexual, reproductive and transgender health:

- Practice changes as a result of COVID-19
- Implications for care and communities
- Innovative responses and adaptations
- Telehealth challenges and successes
- Education opportunities (e.g. online training and conferences)
- Emerging research
- Useful resources

However all contributions are welcomed. Please send any contributions to sexualhealth@ashm.org.au. Submissions for the next edition close on **Monday 10 August**, with the bulletin to be published the following week. Submissions after **Monday 10 August** will go toward subsequent editions.

Please forward this email to your networks.

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.

You are receiving this email because you are an ASHM member or an affiliate through the organisational member program who has indicated an interest in further education. This is our principal way to keep you informed about matters in which you indicate an interest. This email was sent to a targeted group.

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