



Partnerships improving rural women's sexual health

Issue 1 August 2013

Acknowledging Key Partners: The Royal Women's Hospital
Grampians Medicare Local
Ballarat Community Health

welcome

Welcome to the first edition of Women's Health Grampians new quarterly newsletter **aiming to inspire ideas and action to improve rural women's sexual and reproductive health.**

Women's Health Grampians along with our key partners have been **developing regional partnerships seeking to overcome the barriers for rural women accessing family planning services.** Through this work we often learn about interesting initiatives, strategies and resources. This newsletter provides us with an opportunity to share that knowledge across our region.

We would like to **acknowledge The Royal Women's Hospital, Grampians Medicare Local and Ballarat Community Health as our key partners,** thanking them for their support and commitment to date.

In developing a regional network supporting rural women's sexual and reproductive health, we welcome your feedback, contribution and collaboration to both this newsletter and developing partnerships.

regional project update

In December 2012 Women's Health Grampians and The Royal Women's Hospital proudly hosted a forum to **develop regional partnerships.**

13 organisations and 21 people participated, sharing our concerns that in the Grampians region:

- **Major barriers exist for women accessing family planning services**
- **Teenage birth rates are up to 3.5 times higher than Victoria, and,**
- **We recorded the highest rate of Chlamydia in Victoria**

Forum discussions clearly demonstrated a willingness to explore partnerships to support regional work.

Our network now includes 15 organisations, covering 8 of our 11 LGA's, encompassing Hospitals, Primary and Community Care, Health Promotion, PCP's,

Local Government and the Department of Health.

There has been a general consensus that organisations would like to work together to:

- Reduce teenage pregnancy rates
- Reduce distances women need to travel for sexual health services
- Improve access to information for professionals and community
- Raise awareness and support for these regional priorities

As part of our commitment to raise awareness; sexual and reproductive health data was submitted as part of local government municipal health and wellbeing planning and also shared via the media.

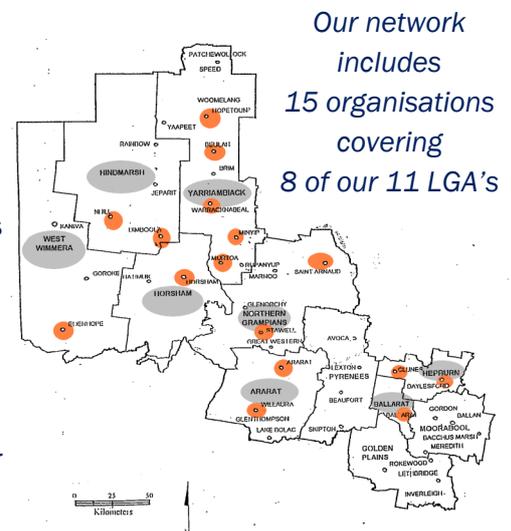
We continue to seek out opportunities to understand local priorities and develop mutually beneficial partnerships.

The Grampians Region has the highest rate of Chlamydia in Victoria

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| HORSHAM | 573 |
| ARARAT | 482 |
| BALLARAT | 417 |
| GRAMP I A N S | 368 |
| VICTORIA | 337 |

RATE PER 100,000 PEOPLE
FOR THE 12 MONTH PERIOD
6-JUN-2012 TO 5-JUN-2013

Source Data: Department of Health Surveillance of Notifiable Conditions



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strategies in the Grampians region

Working across the region we often learn about initiatives improving women's sexual wellbeing. This is an opportunity to profile excellent work underway locally.

“women who have good knowledge of emergency contraception and are easily able to access it, have earlier use, maintain use of prior contraceptive methods and are not more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour or use emergency contraception repeatedly”

[Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia: Emergency Contraception Issues Paper](#)



Rural Northwest Health have campuses in **Warracknabeal, Hopetoun and Beulah** covering the northern part of Yarrambiack Shire.

For further information about this initiative please contact:
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“Increased awareness, affordability and advanced supply of emergency contraception, along with improved training of pharmacists and medical practitioners, have the potential to significantly lower unplanned pregnancy rates in Australia”

[Australian Women's Health Network: Women and Sexual and Reproductive Health Position Paper](#)

Rural Northwest Health: Emergency Contraception in Urgent Care

With the knowledge that the local pharmacy closes at 12pm on Saturday and is not open again until Monday morning; and that research shows emergency contraception is most effective the earlier it is taken after unprotected sex: Rural Northwest Health (RNH) have supported the idea of dispensing Emergency Contraception in Urgent Care.

Women's Health Nurse, Michelle Schilling, initially raised the idea with the Nurse Unit Manager, Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Service Manager, feeling their support would be paramount for effective dispensing of emergency contraception.

Supportive of the idea the Nurse Unit Manager, Jodi Lake, convinced the local doctors and pharmacist this was a product Urgent Care needed to offer local women.

The briefing provided for ward and urgent care staff introducing the idea was well received, and, RNH have not had any complaints or concerns from staff or community members.

The emergency contraception, Postinor, has now been available in Urgent Care at RNH for approximately 12 months.

Contained in blank envelope for privacy the package includes:

- Emergency Contraception and Chlamydia Brochures
- Condoms, and,
- A Contact Card and Women's Health Nurse Referral Form

Urgent Care staff will offer for a nurse to call and discuss future appointment/s, contraception needs or any other issues.

If required, RNH is prepared to meet the cost of the emergency contraception as it is felt that this is a minimal cost compared to the long term emotional, physical and financial costs of an unwanted pregnancy.

At this stage emergency contraception has not been accessed via Urgent Care, however community health has received 2 enquiries, giving an indication that the information is spreading in the community.

strategies outside the region

Sharing knowledge of sexual health strategies underway outside our region aiming to inspire ideas locally.

ACCEPT:

Australian Chlamydia Control Effectiveness Pilot

Department of Health and Ageing commissioned this **trial to assess whether annual chlamydia testing in general practice can lead to a reduction in the incidence of chlamydia.**

Baseline testing of over 4,000 young people has shown there is just as much chlamydia in men (5.2%) as in women (4.3%).

ACCEPT therefore recommends annual testing for all sexually active people aged 16–29 years.

In recognition of an increase in chlamydia prevalence and risk of complications this approach is now reflected in the [RACGP's 'Red Book' guidelines for preventive activities in general practice.](#)

ACCEPT recently shared which testing interventions worked best:

- **A universal offer to test all young people had the greatest impact on testing rates.**
- Routine testing, such as providing a urine jar to patients at registration, resulted in 28% more testing.
- Multifaceted approaches including computer alerts, training, resources and incentive payments increased testing by 44%.
- Linking a chlamydia test to a routine pap test, increased testing by 50%.

If the trial leads to a reduction in chlamydia, it may result in a government national screening program. A report of final findings is expected in December 2014.



'there is just as much chlamydia in men (5.2%) as in women (4.3%)'

*ACCEPT: Newsletter
Issue 9*

links to research or resources

Unplanned Pregnancy Decision Making Guide:

The Royal Women's Hospital takes a woman-centred approach to pregnancy options, providing clear, impartial and evidence-based information on the choices women can make for the difficult decision to continue or terminate their unplanned pregnancy.

Based on the belief that women are in the best position – morally, legally and practically – to make a decision based on their strengths, limitations and resources. **This guide is a useful resource for women or anyone supporting a woman with an unplanned pregnancy.** www.thewomens.org.au/Unplannedpregnancy

"Unplanned pregnancies are very common. In Australia, there are around 200,000 each year"

Better Health Channel

professional development

2013 Australasian Sexual Health Conference

23-25 October Darwin

Aimed at all health professionals this conference will focus on:

- emerging models of care
- the latest research on sexuality and sex education, and,
- the changing face of sexual health nationally and internationally

www.sexualhealthconference.com.au

SEXrurality Conference

Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH)

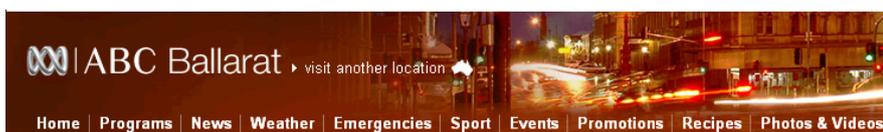
Rural practitioners, policy makers and advocates will be presenting current projects, evidence and research improving sexual health and wellbeing in a rural setting.

The program is now available online: <http://www.etches.com/ehome/sexrurality2013/124552/?&>

**CERSH: SEXrurality Conference
19-20 August Shepparton**

WHG will present our work on developing partnerships to support the Grampians region

in the media



25 June, 2013 3:42PM AEST

Abortion, contraception still a problem for women in regional Victoria

By Lily Partland

Rural women's health services across the state have conducted groundbreaking research that shows there are still considerable barriers for women in rural Victoria in trying to access family planning services like contraception and abortions.



ABC Statewide Drive recently covered a story based on statewide research developed by Women's Health Grampians and the regional women's health services.

Our research highlights there are still considerable barriers for women in rural Victoria in trying to access family planning services like contraception and abortion.

The interview with **Patty Kinnersly, CEO WHG**, explored the impact of concerns about privacy, availability of services, difficulties with travel or transport and a lack of information.

Dr Claire Pickett from Ballarat Community Health Sexual Health Clinic also provided a first hand account of some of the challenges for local women, in particular young women, in trying to access confidential services and affordable contraception.

We encourage you to read the article and listen to the interviews available online at www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/06/25/3789251.htm?site=ballarat

Reasons why the RU486 PBS listing is so important

On 30 June Federal Health Minister Tanya Plibersek announced that mifepristone and misoprostol would be added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

An article published by Daily Life shared reasons why this is important:

- RU486 has been safely used by millions of women in more than 40 countries for several years
- It is a safer, less invasive procedure
- It opens the possibility to improve access for women in rural and regional Australia
- Lower cost means all women, equally, will have the right to choose, and
- Quoting Tanya Plibersek, "by offering this different option at a very difficult time in a woman's life, I hope that we are giving more choice in what are often extraordinarily difficult circumstances."

The PBS listing will take effect from 1 August 2013. [Click here to view the full article.](#)

Please contact Women's Health Grampians if you would like to contribute ideas or feedback to this newsletter

Grampians Region: overcoming barriers for rural women accessing family planning services

Women's Health Grampians along with our key partners have been holding discussions about how to support regional services to improve women's sexual and reproductive health across the Grampians region.

Our focus is on family planning including contraception, pregnancy counselling, abortion and the professional development needs of service providers.

We readily acknowledge that many organisations across the region have a long history of working hard to address these issues. With this in mind the aim is to build on existing relationships, and develop new connections, to enhance current work, add capacity, and where relevant, provide a new range of initiatives.

We welcome opportunities to consider the sexual and reproductive health issues for women in our region.



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