

# GMHS21



## THE ANNUAL REPORT 2013 GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE, HSE

The Gay Men's Health Service (GMHS) HSE reached its 21<sup>st</sup> year of operation on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2013 and continues to be the only statutory Public Health Service in Ireland for Gay, Bisexual men and men who have sex with men (MSM).

It's important to mention both the outputs of GMHS and this report is made possible by the professionalism and commitment of the multi disciplinary team. Both past and present staff have all provided an example of team effort on a sessional basis in the provision of a comprehensive STI service. It's also made possible by the partnership and involvement of personnel from the GUIDE Clinic St. James's Hospital. The work of the GMHS is publicly acknowledged by the HSE, Public Health and other services and Junior Ministers for Health and the Oireachtas Public Health Committee. When launching GHF 11 in 2013, Mr Patrick Lynch, Assistant National Director HSE, said GMHS 'continued to deliver an effective and valued national service, to a very ethnically diverse group of men'.

This is the 10th annual report to be available on the [www.gmhs.ie](http://www.gmhs.ie) and highlights from this 2013 report are as follows;

- Over 5,800 patients, 882 first-time patients to GMHS registered, 3,800 received results by SMS
- 4,150 doctor and 4,105 nursing contacts
- One in five patients receive a diagnosis
- Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia were the highest followed by Syphilis and HIV
- Men aged 29 and younger represent the highest proportion of infections in all cases
- Details of the 882 First-Time patients in 2013;
  - 7% increase of first-time patients to GMHS over 2012
  - 35% were aged 24 and younger rising to 66% for aged 29 and younger
  - A 6% increase for aged 24 and younger and an increase of 18% for aged 25-29
  - 43% were born abroad an increase of 25% over 2012
  - 22% identified as Black, African, Asian, Chinese or Mixed Race a 47% increase over 2012.
  - One in four for first-time patients received some diagnosis with a 21% rate for Gonorrhoea, 5% for syphilis and 2% for HIV
  - A significant percentage of First-time patients diagnosed with Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia and Syphilis were aged 24 and younger.

The GMHS run STI Checkpoint at Baggot St Hospital, Dublin 4 is for all men who have sex with men (MSM) including transgender people. A multi disciplinary team provide free, friendly and confidential clinics on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and the weekly attendance of over 110 men highlights the popularity and need for such a service. *Over 11,200 gay and bisexual men have registered at the clinic since 1992. Of these 3,831 first time\* patients registered between 2009 and 2013 a 32% increase over the previous five years.*

During each three-hour clinic the team can see 43 clients for doctors (STI Tests) and 60 clients for nursing procedures (blood test, vaccines, treatment etc.). It has a regular (sessional) team of doctors, nurses, health advisors, counsellors, clerical officers, medical scientists and assistants. A consultant in infectious diseases provides medical governance, and there is a full time (WTE) service manager and nurse.

The team hold regular medical audits and review of the standards operation procedures. GMHS is also very involved in HIV and Sexual Health Awareness and Prevention with MSM along with partners Gay Health Network (GHN) and various other groups and committees.

Since its inception GMHS has responded to various outbreaks within the community such as syphilis and since 2012 to the gonorrhoea increase. GMHS reports a significant proportion of the national number of male cases of Gonorrhoea (45%), Chlamydia, HIV and Syphilis. In 2013 due to the dramatic increase in Gonorrhoea amongst gay and bisexual men, as reported by the Health Protection Surveillance Committee (HPSC)<sup>1</sup>, GMHS realigned its team and included a fourth doctor where possible (at no extra cost) for provision of treatment and test of cure.

### STI CHECKPOINT



FOR GAY, BISEXUAL MEN AND MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN  
GMHS, BAGGOT STREET HOSPITAL, DUBLIN 4. [www.gmhs.ie](http://www.gmhs.ie)



\* First-Time or New Patients indicates never attended at GMHS previously: It doesn't mean never tested elsewhere. Return Patients indicates return to GMHS at any stage.

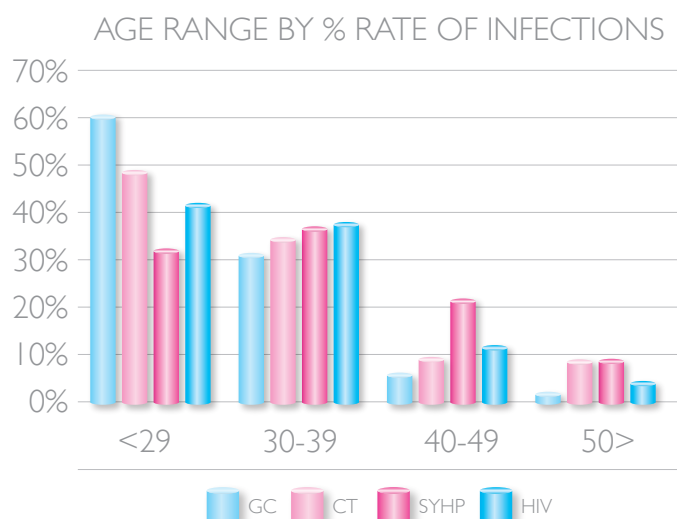
<sup>1</sup> <http://ndsc.newsweaver.ie/epiinsight/16xjz7b64shqldxs0g4hal?a=1&p=31757965&t=17517774>

In 2013 the number of medical consultations and STI screens totalled 4,150 (plus 15% over 2012). Accordingly about one in five men received a diagnosis of one sort or other, and of these a number had the following;

- 290 Gonorrhoea (GC) (11% increase over 2012) 36% were first time patients to the GMHS
- 204 Chlamydia (CT) (34% increase over 2012) 38% were first time to the GMHS
- 33 HIV (minus 20% over 2012) 61% were first time to the GMHS
- 63 Syphilis (18% increase over 2012) 63% were first time to the GMHS
- Note: Not included are cases of Hepatitis C, HSV (genital herpes), HPV (genital warts) or NSU (non specific infection)

Notably, apart from Syphilis, the rates of the above infections were highest among patients aged 29 and younger followed by those in their 30s.

Fig 1. Distribution of GC, CT, HIV and Syphilis Cases (Proportions) by age group AT GMHS.



## 1. PATIENT NUMBERS AND DETAILS AT GMHS 2013

In 2013 the demands on GMHS continued to increase with high numbers of men (over 5,850) attending. 882 of these men were first-time attendees (plus 7% over 2012) with 38% aged 24 and younger, maintaining the increase seen in 2012. 43% were born abroad and 14% resided outside Dublin city and county.

Fulfilling its statutory duty the Health Advisor at GMHS saw 750 men in regards to follow-up and partner notification in relation to a diagnosis.

The nursing provision also increased in 2013 with 4,105 patient contacts and as well as phlebotomy, nurses administer treatment for syphilis and gonorrhoea (420 patients) and the hepatitis vaccinations (1,376 patients).

Fig 2. Nursing Procedures at GMHS 2013

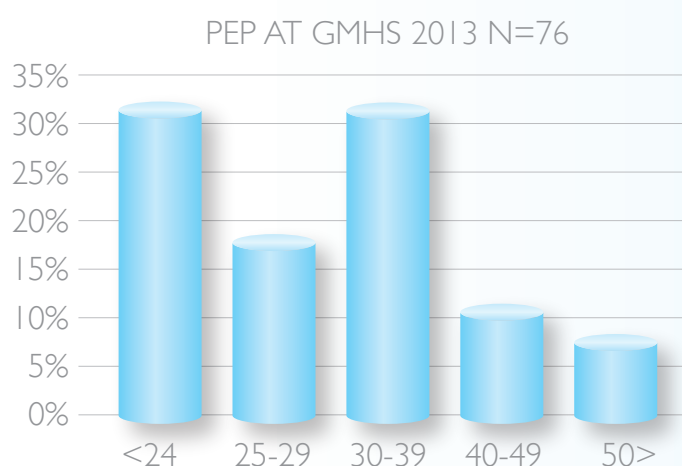
DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF TESTS
HIV	3,170 +9% OVER 2012
SYPHILIS	3,145 + 6%
HEPATITIS C	2,395 +16%
HEPATITIS B (&A)	1,075 +8%
VACCINE COMPLETION BLOOD TEST	1,035 +16%

Counsellors provide therapeutic support and interventions. Pre and post HIV test counselling at the GMHS clinic was supplied to over 880 men. Ongoing counselling was provided to 76 people over 680 sessions at Outhouse LGBT Community Centre, Capel Street, Dublin 1.

## 1.1 PEP AT GMHS

Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) has been prescribed at GMHS over the last years. In 2013, of the 76 Patients prescribed PEP, a significant number n=24 (32%) were aged 24 and younger (the same number for those in their 30s). 38 men (50%) were 29 and younger. 28 (37%) patients were born abroad. These figures were higher among first time patients to GMHS, 38% were aged 24 and younger and 41% were born abroad. GMHS holds a regular audit of PEP (Rowley D. et al 2013) and a further report will be issued in late 2014.

Fig 3. Age Range and PEP Prescription



## 1.2. PROFILE OF FIRST TIME PATIENTS TO GMHS 2013

GMHS provides data on 'first time patients to the clinic' as an important contribution to national trends and planning for service demands. In 2013 there was a significant increase in younger men attending, plus 6% for those aged 24 and younger to 18% for those aged 25 to 29 while there was a 25% reduction in numbers for those in their 40s.

Fig 4: Age Range of First Time Attendees at GMHS 2011 to 2013.

AGE RANGE	<24	25 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50>
2013 n=882	336 (38%)	254 (29%)	205 (23%)	56 (6%)	31 (4%)
2012 n=825	318 (39%)	215 (26%)	186 (23%)	76 (9%)	30 (4%)
2011 n=783	285 (36%)	214 (27%)	185 (24%)	63 (8%)	36 (4%)

## 1.3 ETHNIC AND CULTURAL PROFILES

In 2013 the proportion of men attending and not born on the island of Ireland increased significantly to 43%, compared to 37% in 2012. This was a real increase of 25% (n=380/304) with men born in Brazil or Venezuela showing the highest increase.

Fig 5: Where Born and First Time Attendees at GMHS 2011 to 2013

WHERE BORN	2011 n=783	2012 n=825	2013 n=882
Island of Ireland	479 (61%)	521 (63%)	502 (57%)
Abroad	304 (39%)	304 (37%)	380 (43%)

The 380 men represented 51 countries with the following countries in the top ten: n=136 (36%) Brazil (a 70% increase over 2012), Venezuela n=30(8%) GB n=27(7%), Spain and Poland 21 each (6%) followed by Italy n=16(4%), France, Romania and USA with 11 each (3%) and then Mexico, Malaysia, Lithuania. The Men From Afar Report 4 provides a comprehensive report on this issue.

## 1.4 ETHNICITY

GMHS reports the ethnicity of patients based on the guide from the HSE's National Office, Social Inclusion. In 2013 of the 882 men registered at GMHS, 688 (78%) identified as white Irish or other white (compared to 84% in 2012), and 194 (22%) as Asian, Chinese, African, black, mixed race or other (this was a real increase of 47% when compared to 2012).

## 1.5 PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Most of the new attendees (85%) resided in Dublin city and county (85% in 2012), with a significant number 122 (14%) living in other

parts of Ireland. 7(1%) lived abroad. The Men From Afar 4 report shows of the thousands of men registered at GMHS, 45% resided in HSE region Dublin North East, 50% in Dublin Mid-Leinster, 3% in HSE South and 2% HSE West.

## 1.6 FIRST TIME ATTENDEES TO GMHS & DIAGNOSIS

Of the 882 first time attendees, 242 patients, over one in four (27%), received the following diagnosis; 103 (12%) Gonorrhoea, 78 (9%) Chlamydia, 40 (5%) had treatable syphilis, 20 (2%) had a positive HIV diagnosis. One patient was diagnosed with Hepatitis C (0.10%).

Younger men aged 29 and under made up a significant proportion of diagnosed infections from 75% of gonorrhoea to 65% for those with HIV.

Fig 6: Age Range and % Rate First Time Patients GMHS 2013

AGE RANGE	<24	25 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50>
Gonorrhoea n=103	42%	33%	22%	3%	—
Chlamydia n=78	31%	32%	33%	3%	1%
Syphilis n=40	28%	25%	28%	13%	7%
HIV n=20	15%	50%	35%	—	—

First time patients to GMHS represent a significant percentage of those diagnosed with an infection especially HIV or Syphilis. 36% to 38% of those diagnosed with Gonorrhoea or Chlamydia were first time patients to GMHS. This compares to 61% for those diagnosed with HIV and 63% for those diagnosed with syphilis.

While the rates of infection per total number of tests was 14% for Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia, 2% for Syphilis and 1% for HIV, when broken down between return and new patients it shows a significant higher positive percentage rate for first time patients.

Fig 7: Comparison Return and First Time patients

	All Patients	Return Patients	First Time Patients
Gonorrhoea & Chlamydia	14%	12%	21%
Syphilis	2%	1%	5%
HIV	1%	1%	2%

This part of the report highlights the need for continued and increased access to testing for new patients and for those living in rural Ireland, a key recommendation of the EMIS reports. Already GMHS has a triage priority, symptoms, concerns and first time patients. It is also looking at introducing self-testing for STIs among asymptomatic patients at the GMHS clinic and in partnership with GHN hold outreach clinics as part of the man2man programme.

## 2. HIV PREVENTION & SEXUAL HEALTH AWARENESS

A vital aspect of GMHS work is HIV and sexual health awareness and prevention and along with Gay Health Network (GHN), GMHS co-manages the primarily HSE funded Man2Man programme.

In Ireland, of the 344 new HIV cases in 2013, MSM accounted for 159 (46%). According to the HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) "sex between men is the predominant mode of transmission in Ireland" (Trends in new HIV diagnoses among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Ireland: 2003 to 2012). It's acknowledged by National and International health protection agencies, that access to HIV testing and interventions in relation to education and prevention are vital with this population group.

The high rates of HIV for MSM along with the significant increase in other STI's such as Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia and Syphilis highlights the importance of a targeted service for MSM. The GMHS clinic diagnosed a significant proportion of the national cases of MSM with HIV and STIs ([www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)). It also shows that addressing these concerns in a holistic and comprehensive approach is important and already adopted by GMHS since its inception and outlined in the National Strategy for HIV and the forthcoming National Sexual Health Strategy.

GMHS is involved in the HSE-EAST Public Health Department's Gonorrhoea Control Group and the working group on services for the The National Sexual Health Strategy. Though the Outreach team provided by GMHS ceased to exist, it works closely in partnership with GHN and its members Gay Switchboard Ireland and Belongto Youth Services to continue to provide outreach initiatives to the LGBT community and to MSM nationwide. The Gay Switchboard runs a Sexual Health Information Drop-In every Saturday based at the GMHS offices at Outhouse.

The HSE and Gay Health Network (GHN) Man2Man Programme [www.man2man.ie](http://www.man2man.ie) launched on December 1st 2011 was maintained in 2013 and succeeded in acquiring funding resources (from Health Promotion HSE DML, the National Social Inclusion Office HSE and the MAC AIDS Fund) to continue the programme in 2014. GMHS and partners in GHN provide management for the Man2Man programme. Other significant happenings for GMHS in 2013 were:

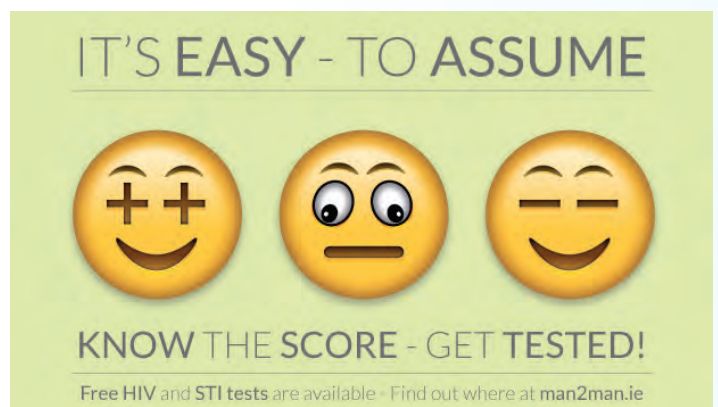
- Along with GHN published LUV Bug Leaflets on Gonorrhoea, HIV, Chlamydia, Syphilis
- The main report on European Men who Have Sex with men internet Survey (EMIS 2010) was published by the ECDC (GMHS is the country lead for this).
- GMHS and GHN published EMIS Ireland Report: Man2man Report 3; Our Sex Lives:
- "The Men from Afar 4" report ethnic & cultural background of men attending GMHS
- GMHS 20: The Annual Report 2012

- Articles in EPI-Insight ([www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie))
- Organised the 11th Annual Gay Health Forum (at Dr Steven's Hospital) along with GHN and supported by the Department of Health.
- Continued to supply condoms and lubricant as part of HIV prevention initiatives.
- Promoted at LGBT Pride events and in the GCN magazine and social media, awareness of and access to HIV and STI screening services for MSM
- Released film "what happens at the Clinic" [www.gmhs.ie](http://www.gmhs.ie)
- Presented at SHAW (Sexual Health Awareness Week) and also at SSSTD1.
- Presented along with GHN at the Oireachtas sub committee for Health and Children

## CONCLUSION

This report shows the continued work of GMHS and the increasing demand on its services. The popularity of the clinic and the significant cohort of MSM attending from all parts of Ireland show that the HSE is fulfilling some of the indicators from the National Strategy and is also contributing to research and understanding in this public health area. It highlights the need for increased access to testing.

GMHS contributes significantly to HIV and sexual health prevention and awareness. As a HSE service, GMHS values the partnership with the Gay Health Network (GHN), individuals and members across Ireland, Outhouse (LGBT Community Centre), Gay Switchboard Ireland and BeLONGTo Youth Service amongst others and sees the continued sustainability of the man2man programme as vital for a national response to HIV and sexual health education and prevention for MSM in Ireland.



## GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE

SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN AND FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

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W: [www.gmhs.ie](http://www.gmhs.ie) for Services, Reports and Links



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

<sup>2</sup> <http://ndsc.newsweaver.ie/epiinsight/1oqqh2s05qn?a=1&p=43619675&t=175177741>.