

GMHS17



THE ANNUAL REPORT 2009 FOR THE GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE HSE

2009 was a very eventful year; a high was the move to a new space within Baggot St Hospital and the introduction of full STI screenings on Tuesdays, a low was the illness in 2009 and death early in 2010 of Dr Nuala Kilcoyne, one of our longest members of staff. This annual report along with the 8th Annual Gay Health Forum, Dublin Castle (where this report is launched) is dedicated to her memory.

The HPSC reports on increases in STIs, HIV and Syphilis figures along with research and other reports, including the National AIDS Strategy Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2011, highlights the need for continued targeted information and services to men who have sex with men (MSM), particularly younger men. This Annual Report outlines actions taken by the HSE's Gay Men's Health Service (GMHS) and its partners, and also highlights the concerns in high rates of infections among younger men attending our services. The uptake of GMHS services and diagnoses among this group has proved correct the support and introduction of special promotions along with the introduction of the second evening STI screening service in October 2009 when GMHS reached its 17th year.

GMHS remains the only dedicated HSE service for gay and bisexual men in the South of Ireland and the attendance at the clinics continued to rise in 2009. Importantly there was a rise of 13% in first time attendees, most of whom never previously had had an HIV or syphilis blood test or STI screen. The campaign in relation to the syphilis upsurge "Syph-Action and Syph-Test" was reflected at the clinic and led to increased testing. Also in July 2009 the GMHS team provided onsite testing for HIV and Syphilis at gay saunas and bars. Meanwhile at the GMHS clinic hundreds of men continue to receive the Hepatitis A & B vaccines. The new attendees at the STI clinic were slightly older and 35% were born in countries other than the island of Ireland.

The key role and task of GMHS in relation to HIV and sexual health services was particularly recognised by Aine Brady TD, Minister responsible for Health Promotion and Chairperson of the National AIDS Strategy Committee (NASC) when launching the 7th Annual Gay Health Forum. Our community HIV prevention and sexual health awareness programme continued in partnership with the Gay Health Network (GHN), Johnny (gay peer action group), Outhouse (LGBT Community Centre) and BeLonG To Youth Service. GMHS is represented on SWAI (Sex Workers Alliance Ireland), NASC, the HSE Advisory Group on LGBT Health and two European Groups, The Correlation and EMIS (European Man for man sex survey).

GMHS has a national remit and is administered by LHO Area 2, Martina Queally Local Health Manager and Mary Kenny, General Manager who kindly expressed their support and appreciation to the GMHS Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) for their ongoing commitment, professionalism and motivation in provision of this sexual health service.

Details of the GMHS services and reports can be seen at www.gmhs.ie and also in the "On the One Road" Newsletter Issue 7 www.ghn.ie

GMHS ACHIEVEMENTS & INVOLVEMENT IN 2009

- With GHN launched the "Rubber Up Campaign" and production of the "On the One Road" Newsletter and "Living with HIV+ Sex" booklet.
- Organised the 7th Annual All Ireland Gay Health Forum at Dublin Castle.
- Published the Real Lives 2 report on the All Ireland Gay Men's Sex Survey 2005 and 2006.
- The European Correlation Network and EMIS (European Man for Man Survey) to be launched in 2010.
- Completed 3 Personal Development Courses.
- Published Men From Afar 3 with The Centre for Global Health TCD.
- Along with Johnny continued to provide the safer sex packs (condoms and lube) in the community.
- On site testing for HIV and syphilis.
- Carried out the SAKA Survey in the community.
- Ongoing LGBT Awareness Training to Social Work and Addiction Studies Course TCD.

GMHS CLINIC

GMHS operates the STI clinic at Baggot St. Hospital, Dublin 4 on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and the doors open from 5pm to 7.45pm. The Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) provide a free, friendly, confidential and professional service which is very welcomed by our clients. In 2009, over 5,750 men attended for services and first time clients accounted for 655, an increase of 13% over 2008. This brings to 7,275 the number of men who have registered at GMHS between January 1997 and December 2009.

NUMBERS FOR GMHS CLINIC IN 2009

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 100 Clinics (50 Tue and 50 Wed) | 1984 Syphilis Tests +15% over 2008 |
| 655 New clients +13% over 2008 | 1837 HIV Tests +18% over 2008 |
| 5757 Client visits +11% over 2008 | 730 Hepatitis B Tests |
| 2354 Walk-ins +16% over 2008 | 758 Post Hepatitis Vaccine Blood Test |
| 1870 Triage Sessions | 750 Pre HIV Test Discussion sessions |
| 1750 Medical STI screens | 735 Pre HIV Test Counselling sessions |
| 3102 Nursing contacts +11% | 1104 Hepatitis Vaccine |

GMHS continue to diagnose and provide a significant proportion of the total MSM-related HIV and syphilis cases reported nationally to the HPSC. Preliminary reports indicate at the GMHS clinic there were approximately 231 positive diagnoses of the following: 145 diagnoses of an STI: Chlamydia: Urethral and Rectal, Gonorrhoea: Urethral, Rectal and Pharyngeal (8% of all STI screens), 35 HIV Positive diagnoses (1.75% of all HIV blood tests) and 51 Syphilis Infectious (treatable) diagnoses (2.90% of all syphilis blood tests). A very low number had dual or multiple diagnoses. A significant number of those receiving a diagnoses were first time attendees to the clinic and this is expanded on next.

Note: The Hepatitis A, B and C diagnoses and uptake on vaccinations and a fuller medical report on all diagnoses will be published late 2010.

PROFILES OF FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

In-depth reporting on first time attendees is important as it helps to assess the impact of and access to services and also for indication of prevalence among this cohort. As for most of the men it is the first time they have tested for STI, HIV or Syphilis including the Hepatitis test and vaccine.

AGE PROFILE

In 2009 a quarter of the men were aged 24 and younger. While there was a decrease in younger attendees, there was a significant increase of men in their 30s and older when compared to 2008.

| AGE RANGE | <20 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60> |
|----------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 2009 N=655 | 16 (2%) | 136 (21%) | 198 (30%) | 198 (30%) | 72 (11%) | 22 (3%) | 13 (2%) |
| 2008 N=580 | 27 (4%) | 168 (30%) | 167 (29%) | 148 (26%) | 51 (9%) | 12 (2%) | 7 (1%) |

PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=638)

Most of the new attendees, 527 (84%), lived in Dublin City (all postal areas were indicated) and County, but a significant number 101 (16%) lived in other parts of Ireland.

ETHNIC AND CULTURAL PROFILES (n=655)

In 2004 one in four men were born outside the island of Ireland. Since 2006 this has been rising to over one in three. In 2009, 35% (230) were born outside the Island of Ireland (representing 46 countries) with 6% (14) of these living outside Dublin city and County.

| WHERE BORN | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Island of Ireland | 76% | 74% | 69% | 63% | 64% | 65% |
| Abroad | 24% | 26% | 31% | 37% | 36% | 35% |

FIRST TIME ATTENDEES TO GMHS AND DIAGNOSES

Of the 655 first time attendees 103 received a positive diagnosis of as follows 55 (8.4%) received an STI diagnoses (Chlamydia: Urethral and Rectal, Gonorrhoea: Urethral, Rectal and Pharyngeal), 31 (4.7%) received an infectious (treatable) Syphilis diagnoses and 17 (2.6%) a positive HIV diagnoses.

A quarter of the positive HIV and infectious Syphilis diagnoses were among men aged 24 and younger and this rose to over half for those aged 29 and younger. STI diagnoses were significantly higher among younger men.

| STIs n=55 | Syphilis n=31 | HIV n=17 | Diagnoses by Age Range |
|-----------|---------------|----------|------------------------|
| 42.0% | 26% | 23.5% | Aged 24 and less |
| 67.5% | 52% | 58.5% | Aged 29 and less |
| 85.5% | 65% | 76% | Aged 39 and less |
| 98% | 94% | 100% | Aged 49 and less |
| 100% | 100% | | Aged 59 and less |

The prevalence rate within each age group compared to the overall rate (in the left column) provides a clearer indication.

| 2009 n=655 | <24 (n=152) | 25-29 (n=198) | 30-39 (n=198) | 40-49 (n=72) | 50-59 (n=22) | 60> |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----|
| HIV n=17(2.6%) | 2.5% | 3.0% | 1.5% | 5.5% | nil | nil |
| Syphilis n=31(4.7%) | 5.0% | 4.0% | 2.0% | 12.5% | 9.0% | nil |
| STIs n=55(8.4%) | 15.0% | 7.0% | 5.0% | 9.7% | 4.5% | |

The prevalence rate among the younger age group when compared to the overall rate highlights the need for on going targeted information and services.

GMHS, in partnership with GHN and BeLonG To Youth Services are continuing to plan to provide information to this group, while GHN are working with the HSE to provide mainstreaming of sexual health information for MSM to make available at all GP and public health centres.

SYPHILIS AWARENESS PROMOTION IN 2009

In late 2008 it was noticed there was an upsurge of syphilis among MSM. A special representative committee from statutory and NGO agencies was organised by Dr Margaret Fitzgerald, Consultant, Public Health Department HSE. GMHS along with GHN and Johnny launched the "Syph-Action and Syph-Test" campaign to raise awareness and to promote testing via posters, adverts and leaflets including a promotion banner on Gaydar (one of the largest gay commercial social websites).

ONSITE TESTING

It was agreed to hold a series of onsite testing sessions for syphilis at gay saunas in Dublin. The previous onsite testing took place in 2001 and 2003 and was for syphilis only. This time however it was decided to provide an opportunity for HIV testing, on an opt-in basis. Over three weekends in July 2009 the GMHS team carried out onsite testing in gay saunas and bars. A total of 131 men tested for syphilis with 116 of these testing for HIV. 37 (32%) men tested for syphilis and 35 (29%) tested for HIV for the first time. Overall 51% were aged 39 and younger while 12% were aged over 50. 29% lived outside Dublin city and county while 78% were born on the island of Ireland. Preliminary results indicated a 1.5% positive rate for infectious (treatable) syphilis and a 3.5% positive rate for HIV. After the onsite testing sessions there was a noticeable increase in demand for syphilis tests at the GMHS clinic.

SAKA

In June GMHS commissioned research, SAKA (Syphilis Awareness Knowledge and Action) to measure the awareness, knowledge, and action (testing) in relation to syphilis among the MSM population. Questions were also asked to determine the reach of the all-Ireland Syphilis Awareness Campaign. During the Dublin LGBT Pride concert on 25 June 2009, men were approached and invited to participate in a short, self-completing survey. GMHS, GHN and Gay Project Cork volunteers and workers also recruited men in various other venues, including bars, clubs, saunas and LGBT community centres in Dublin and Cork over a six-week period following the Dublin LGBT Pride event. A total of 543 questionnaires were completed. Of the 516 valid surveys, 80% were collected in Dublin and 20% were collected in Cork. Overall, 88% of respondents identified as gay, 10% as bisexual, and 2% as other. The age profile of the sample represents a younger population with almost half (46%) under the age of 30 years and approximately one-quarter (24%) aged 24 years or less. The final report will be published in June 2010.

GMHS OUTREACH

GMHS has one health promotion outreach worker based in Outhouse, (LGBT Community Centre) who continues to be busy with individual client contacts, interventions, publications, distribution of safer sex packs, and dealing with the increased demand for training. Workshops such as "summer loving" on various topics for gay and

bisexual men and the popular Personal Development Courses. Outreach also engaged in partnership work with Gay Health Network (GHN), BeLonG To Youth Service and Outhouse (LGBT Community Centre). Importantly outreach is heavily involved in joint work with Johnny (gay peer action) distributing "condom and lube" packs and information to gay commercial venues.

Established since 2000 there were three Personal Development Course in 2009 bringing the total to 37. The PDC is organised and run by two facilitators who provide a comprehensive and popular 8 week course on Tuesday evenings at Outhouse.

GMHS COUNSELLING

Both counselling at the GMHS clinic and at Outhouse is important especially for therapeutic interventions regarding risk taking. It is also important for support for men diagnosed with HIV and reducing the chance of onward infection. The counsellor service based in Outhouse remained in great demand in 2009. The counselling services based at Outhouse remained in great demand in 2009. The four sessional counsellors provide 16 client sessions per week. An assessment service is provided to anyone making a new request by the senior counselor and clients are placed on a waiting list or referred onwards according to need.

MANAGEMENT

The work of the manager reflects the business of the project and the other demands in supervision, co-ordination, promotion, research, training, publications and partnership work, involvement in networks such as mentioned above and both national and regional steering committees such as the National AIDS Strategy Committee, and others. In 2009 a steering committee was established by LHO senior management who meet regularly and it is intended to produce and publish Policy and Procedure Guidelines by the end of 2010. The goal for 2010 and beyond is to continue managing GMHS to deliver a quality and effective service, making it more accessible and relevant to men who have sex with men.

GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE

SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN
STI CLINIC, COUNSELLING, OUTREACH, INFORMATION, TRAINING & RESEARCH

BAGGOT ST HOSPITAL, DUBLIN 4

T: +353 1 669 9553 F: +353 1 660 7982 E: gmhsadmin@hse.ie

W: www.gmhs.ie for Services, Reports and Links





DR NUALA KILCOYNE AN APPRECIATION

In January 2010 the GMHS Team lost a dear friend and colleague Dr Nuala McLean (nee Kilcoyne). After a long illness she died peacefully at home, lovingly cared for by her husband Peter and especially her daughter Loraine who looked after her through the many months of her illness.

In January 1993, Dr Nuala Kilcoyne (as she was more commonly known) started with the Gay Men's Health Service. Up to last April 2009, she worked tirelessly as the only doctor at the Tuesday evening clinics and with two other doctors on Wednesdays. Apart from annual leave she hardly missed a clinic in all those 16 plus- years in providing a service to many thousands of men.

Nuala was and remains an inspiration to many for her hard work, humour, kindness and resilience. You could never tell her age, yet she was in her late 50s when she began working at the GMHP clinic for gay and bisexual men, the only one in Ireland at the time and months

before homosexuality was decriminalised. Can you imagine how that was, but she jumped in and loved it and learned a lot from our clients. In return Nuala was loved by the team and by the men attending the clinic, for her forthright manner and sense of fun and devilment. She really enjoyed the GMHS team get-togethers, especially when they ended up in a gay bar and club.

Her sounds, demands and laughter is sorely missed and condolences is offered to her husband Peter and daughter Loraine and family members, on behalf of the HSE senior management the GMHS team (current and past) and our clients. Finally I am sure our other much missed friend Noel Walsh would understand and agree when we say "Come On Nuala".

Mick Quinlan
Manager GMHS February 2010.