

Summer 2018

Numbers of heterosexuals diagnosed with HIV are not reducing!

The total number of heterosexual people diagnosed with HIV in 2017 is still much lower than the number of gay and bisexual men. However there has been a significant decline in new diagnoses for gay and bisexual men but not for heterosexuals.

In NSW as in the rest of Australia people born overseas and heterosexual men and women are still being diagnosed late.

Being diagnosed late is when people test positive for HIV after the virus has started to damage their immune system. Being diagnosed with T-cells are lower than 350 is considered a late diagnosis. Late diagnosis is something to avoid as the health problems can be severe and ongoing.

Many people in the general community do not realise that heterosexual men and women can be at risk of HIV and that heterosexual transmissions in Australia currently make up about 1 in 5 diagnoses (21% in 2016). In 2016 almost half of heterosexual people diagnosed with HIV were diagnosed late. There was also a steady increase in Aboriginal diagnoses – many of these being heterosexual transmissions.

In 2018 Pozhet will be working with other organisations to raise awareness about HIV testing and transmission in heterosexual populations.



Share your story

Do you have a story about being diagnosed late? Did you believe you might have been at risk of getting HIV? Had you ever considered having a HIV test prior to diagnosis? Let us know. Stories can be as short or as long as you wish and can be anonymous if you prefer. Contact Pozhet if you need more information.



An undetectable viral load means no risk of transmission to partners

UNDETECTABLE = UNTRANSMITTABLE



In September, 2017, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has confirmed that “people who take ART daily as prescribed and achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting the virus to an HIV-negative partner.”

This is a big step forward for people with HIV. If you are undetectable you cannot pass on HIV. For years scientific studies have proven this, and now we have confirmation from the highest authorities.

Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases had this to say:

“Scientists never like to use the word ‘never’ of a possible risk. But I think in this case we can say that the risk of transmission from an HIV-positive person who takes treatment and has an undetectable viral load may be so low as to be unmeasurable, and that’s the same as saying they are uninfected.”

So stay in touch with your HIV doctor, keep taking your medications and live your life happy, positive and free!



Inter view

Ariane, a counsellor from Lismore Sexual Health kindly agreed to answer a few questions about the Lismore Sexual Health service and the challenges for heterosexual people living with HIV in regional areas.

What does your service do?

We provide a free and confidential service, including check-ups and treatments for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV testing. We do HIV management, and I personally do counselling, support and advocacy. We also do some Hepatitis A and B vaccinations for people who are eligible and we are a secondary NSP (needle and syringe exchange provider). We do both morning booked appointments and afternoon drop-in clinics. We also do health education in terms of linking in with GPs. We run an outreach clinic at Byron Bay and are linked in with Clinic 145 at Tweed Heads.

Do you see many heterosexual people living with HIV, if so what services do they come for?

We do see heterosexual people living with HIV, and they often come to see the specialist so they can be prescribed HIV treatments: They attend Lismore Sexual health for HIV management and counselling as well.

* A person with a sexually transmissible disease is no longer required by law to disclose that they have the condition prior to sexual intercourse – but are required to take reasonable precautions. See www.halc.org.au

What are the key issues for heterosexuals living with HIV in regional and rural NSW?

I think that there is a huge issue with regards to confidentiality and disclosure. For example the two people that I'm seeing at the moment, they don't want anybody to know they're living with HIV. So these people don't want to have sexual relationships with anyone because they don't want to have to disclose.* They do not feel like they're going to travel down to Sydney to access services, it's too far for them, especially with petrol money. We also do peer-linkage here, but that doesn't guarantee that the clients want to be linked. I don't want to make gross generalisations, but it seems that it might be more difficult for the males that identify as heterosexual.

What kind of services do you think this population needs that are currently not provided?

We need some kind of general campaign that over time it becomes clear that you're not a pariah if you're a person living with HIV. In this area you feel a lot more vulnerable and visible, because it's not like a larger city where you have more anonymity.

I even have two couples living with HIV at the moment and neither of the couples wants anybody to know that they're living with HIV; it's very difficult and isolating. I think for the people living in our area that are gay and living with HIV there is more support, and they seem to be more likely to be upfront about it. There is also a history of gay people more readily using social media which has categories and options to identify as HIV positive so there are fewer stigmas, but I can't imagine RSVP having that.

Lismore Sexual Health Service
4 Shepherd Lane, Lismore
(02) 6620 2980 (For appointments and inquiries)

New video led by Pozhet Consumer Group!

In 2018 we will be releasing an animation which has been developed by the Pozhet Consumer Group, which is a group of clients who meet regularly to advise Pozhet about issues for heterosexual people living with HIV. The idea and script was workshopped by the Consumer Group and we then worked with a consultant to create the animation. The 2 minute animation will be released on social media and will be available on the website and will hopefully raise awareness about heterosexuals and HIV in the general community. If you are interested in joining the Consumer Group, contact Pozhet for more information.



From left back row: Chi and Solomon are from the team which manages Pozhet. Peter, Susan, Maxine and Jean Marie are the Pozhet workers. Peter is our IT and database wiz and Susan, Maxine and Jean Marie are Health Educators. If you call or visit Pozhet they will be the ones you talk to.

Plans for 2018

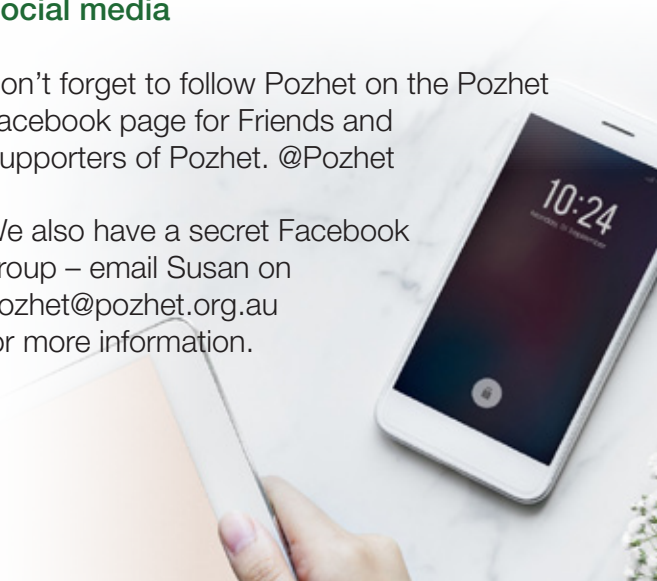
In 2018 Pozhet will be visiting services and clients throughout Sydney and in Hunter and the Illawarra. To ensure you receive updates about all our activities, join the Pozhet mailing list by ringing 1800 812 404 or emailing pozhet@pozhet.org.au with your contact details.

The Pozhet website has information about all upcoming events such as weekend retreats and the Annual Workshop. Keep checking the website to stay up to date about groups and other events.

Social media

Don't forget to follow Pozhet on the Pozhet Facebook page for Friends and Supporters of Pozhet. @Pozhet

We also have a secret Facebook group – email Susan on pozhet@pozhet.org.au for more information.



Pozhet has a new office

Pozhet has moved and most activities such as the Consumer group and the Drop-ins will be held at 18 Marsden Street, Camperdown. (It is next door to RPA Sexual Health and just off Missenden Road where RPA Hospital is). Just push the buzzer that says Pozhet. Larger events such as the Annual Workshop will continue to be held at Redfern.