

# Ms Elissa O'KEEFE

Elissa O'Keefe (presenter) and Frank Bowden, Canberra Sexual Health Centre, The Canberra Hospital

## **Sex, Drugs And Hip-Hop: Investigating Sexual Health Outcomes In A Senior School Aged Population**

### **Abstract**

*Aim:* This presentation reports on the sexual health outcomes of a comprehensive sexual health-screening project in an ACT senior high school. Outcomes reported are the number of students who were sexually active, screened, infected, treated or managed with an sexually transmitted disease (STI) or blood born virus (BBV) and referred to another health care provider. The number of education and health promotion sessions is also reported.

*Background:* More than half of Australian adolescents are sexually active by the time they finish Year 12. STI may be acquired as soon as sexual activity commences, with young women particularly vulnerable. The public health importance lies in the long-term morbidities such as pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and chronic liver disease. In Australia, the highest incidence of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, hepatitis B and hepatitis C occur in younger people, and these data probably underestimate the true prevalence of these largely asymptomatic infections. Prevention and/or early intervention are demonstrably effective in reducing transmission and negative sequelae.

*Methods:* This was a collaborative project between the Canberra Sexual Health Centre (CSHC) and an ACT senior high school community, conducted in July and August of 2002. The project team was comprised of registered nurses, medical officers, administration staff and teacher-facilitators. Consultations with school staff, board members, students and parents were undertaken prior to the project. Ethics approval was obtained from the ACT Health and Community Care Research Ethics Committee, and ACT Department of Education and Community Services. Participation was voluntary, consent obtained in writing, with those under 16 years of age required to obtain parental consent. School classrooms were used as clinics. Data comprised of sexual and medical health information and biological specimens. Urine and blood samples and vaginal swabs collected and screened for the common STI (chlamydia, gonorrhoea, trichomoniasis, genital wart virus and syphilis) and BBV (HIV, Hepatitis B and C). Health education and if necessary referral formed part of clinical consultations. School newsletters and small student group meetings were used to disseminate information. Results clinics were conducted in week 3.

*Results:* Of the 900 students enrolled at the school 273 (31%) participated. There were 168 females and 103 males of whom 171 (63%) were sexually active. 101 students were not sexually active and one declined to answer. 263 (63%) students were screened for some or all STI and BBV. Of these 8% had an STI and 0.7% had a BBV. Two of the most common STI were the herpes simplex virus and chlamydia. A significant proportion (92%) did not have antibodies against hepatitis B. Those choosing not to be screened (4%) were offered sexual health education on a topic of their choice. Twelve students were referred to either/or CSHC, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT and a general practitioner for other issues.

*Conclusion:* School-based sexual health screening is an acceptable and feasible strategy for the prevention, identification, treatment and management of STI and BBV. It also offers a vehicle for referral and sexual health education and promotion. This research has the ability to inform public health and education policy for this group.

The *Proceedings* of the conference **Health Outcomes 2003: The Quest for Practice Improvement** are produced on CDROM. The *Proceedings* contain all abstracts and most of the papers presented at the conference, as well as all slide and poster presentations. If you would like to purchase the *Proceedings* please complete and return the [order form](#) or contact [ahoc@uow.edu.au](mailto:ahoc@uow.edu.au) (Tel. 02 4221 4411).

The order form is at <http://www.uow.edu.au/commerce/ahoc/ConferenceProceedingsOrderForm.pdf>