

GMHS 18



THE ANNUAL REPORT 2010
GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE, HSE



GHF8 Dublin Castle 2010 - Mick Quinlan (GMHS), Minister of State, Aine Brady TD, Ronan Watters (GMHS) Susan Donlon (GHN).

In 2010 the Gay Men's Health Service HSE (GMHS) reached its 18th year and remains the only statutory, dedicated sexual health service for gay, bisexual men and men who have sex with men (MSM) in the Republic of Ireland. Though affected by the economic situation the demands on the clinical and other services continued to increase.

The HPSC reported figures for HIV, syphilis and other STIs among MSM continues to be a cause for concern with the diagnosis at the GMHS clinic accounting for a significant proportion of the national figures.

The European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) report on HIV in Europe published in 2010 recommended that "interventions to control HIV among MSM should be the cornerstone of HIV prevention strategies in countries in western Europe." This is in keeping with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the National AIDS Strategy Committee (NASC) HIV Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2012. The GMHS targeted HIV prevention and sexual health services, and work with Gay Health Network (GHN), fulfils some of this as was gratefully acknowledged by Minister of State, Aine Brady TD, (Chairperson of NASC) when launching the 8th Annual Gay Health Forum.

The largest survey ever held among MSM took place in the summer of 2010 – EMIS: the European MSM Internet Survey - and the GMHS manager was the country co-ordinator for Ireland. Over 174,000

MSM completed the survey across 38 countries, making it the largest of its kind in the world. Certainly, with 2,588 respondents, it is the largest ever MSM survey for the island of Ireland. The initial 1st community report showed 6% were HIV positive (or 10% of the men who had tested) and 9% had been treated for syphilis.

In December 2010 as a result of the GMHS and HPSC reports, along with the EMIS and Real Lives 3 initial findings, a joint proposal was formulated for a new campaign aimed at MSM. The HSE health promotion departments for Dublin Mid Leinster (DML) and Dublin North East (DNE) accepted this proposed partnership and a GHN/HSE national campaign will be launched in 2011 with an emphasis on younger MSM especially those living outside main urban areas in DML and DNE.

This GMHS 18 report outlines some of the work at the clinic and with our partners in 2010 and for which we look forward to continuing in 2011.

GMHS STI CLINIC FOR MSM

In 2010 there was a 5% increase in first time attendees, over a third were aged 24 and younger, 36% were born in countries other than the island of Ireland while 15% resided outside Dublin City and County. A 57% increase in STI screens (due to introduction of the STI screening on Tuesday evenings) and a 14% to 16% increase in blood tests for HIV and Syphilis and 18% in provision of the Hepatitis vaccine.

At least one-in-ten clients received some sort of diagnosis, with 3% of the clients diagnosed with syphilis and a further 2% with HIV (these % were higher among first time attendees).

The GMHS STI clinical service is vital and unique, with a cost effective operation providing "value for money". During each three hour clinic held twice per week, the team can guarantee to see a minimum of 36 clients for doctors (STI Screens) and 60 clients for nursing contacts (blood test, vaccines etc). It has a regular (sessional) team of; doctors, nurses, health advisor, counsellors, clerical officers, assistants. Medical governance is provided by a consultant in infectious diseases, and there is a full time service manager, nurse and clerical officer. Many including the HSE executive management have commended the commitment, professionalism and motivation of the GMHS multi-disciplinary team.

Details of the GMHS services and reports can be seen at www.gmhs.ie and also in issues numbered 6 to 9 of the "On the One Road" Newsletter at www.ghn.ie.

GMHS PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS 2010

- The 8th Annual All Ireland Gay Health Forum (GHF8) was successfully held at Dublin castle with various presentations and workshops.
- GMHS continued to supply the free safer sex packs (condom and lubricant) as part of the HIV prevention initiatives.
- GHN launched the new poster and advert campaign "Get it On, Get Informed, Get Tested, Get Support" at Dublin LGBT Pride.
- Produced the "Poppers Card" directing MSM to the information on poppers.
- Produced the "4 Steps to Immunity" the information card on Hepatitis B testing and vaccination.
- Launched the new comprehensive website www.Man2Man.ie providing information HIV and sexual Health in 9 languages plus support and other resources for MSM.

HIV PREVENTION & MSM

HIV prevention and sexual health awareness programmes and research continued in partnership with the Gay Health Network (GHN), Johnny (gay peer action group), Outhouse (LGBT Community Centre) and BeLonG To Youth Service amongst others.

GMHS is also represented on NASC, SWAI (Sex Workers Alliance Ireland), the syphilis upsurge meetings organised by the Public Health Department HSE, the HSE Advisory Group working on the strategic framework and action plan for LGBT health and two European Networks, The Correlation Network and EMIS (European MSM Internet Survey).

GMHS PROMOTION IN THE COMMUNITY

In 2010 Ronan Watters the last Outreach worker employed by GMHS went on incentive leave. Ronan served GMHS and the community well and will be missed greatly. Negotiations were held with the management of Outhouse LGBT Community Centre to continue to provide some administration for GMHS. This involved making the safer sex packs available at the centre and for answering the GMHS telephone to deal with requests and also administer the counselling list and the personal development and assertiveness courses.

THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT FOR MSM

Therapeutic support and interventions is important regarding emotional well being, risk taking, self esteem and assertiveness. GMHS provides this through counselling and the personal development courses. Pre HIV test counselling is offered at the GMHS clinic for all first time clients, while ongoing counselling is provided at Outhouse LGBT Community Centre by regular sessional counsellors. This service is in great demand and a waiting list is in operation. For new requests an assessment is provided and 56 persons received this in 2010. As a result some clients received crisis counselling or a referral or were placed on the GMHS waiting list. This counselling service can commit to 16 client sessions per week with each client offered at least 8 sessions and are then reviewed. In 2010 just over 700 sessions was provided to 70 clients (59 clients in 2009).

An overview of the service and client profiles was presented at GHF8, basically clients are; aged from 17 to 70 with the majority in their late 20s, though aimed at MSM some of the clients are lesbian, bisexual or transgender, 20% were born outside Ireland. Some issues raised were to do with; family, acceptance of homosexuality, fear of coming out, self esteem, relationships, bereavement, suicide ideation, addiction, bisexuality, cross dressing, safer sex issues, fear of HIV etc. Some of the clients are living with HIV.

ASSERTIVENESS & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Two facilitators held three of the very popular Assertiveness and Personal Development Courses at Outhouse. This eight week course held on a Tuesday evening attracted up to twenty MSM for each of the three courses held in 2010 bringing it to a total of 39 courses since they began in 2000.

RESEARCH & MSM

GMHS along with GHN and Sigma Research has led on research among MSM since 2000 and at GHF8 some findings were presented on the Real Lives 3 - the All Ireland MSM Internet Survey 2007 and 2008. Also the EMIS survey took place in the summer of 2010 with 2,588 respondents for Ireland the largest ever MSM survey for the island of Ireland.

RESEARCH REPORTS 2010

EMIS: THE EUROPEAN MSM INTERNET SURVEY 1st community report (CR1) was launched in December 2010 and the 2nd one (CR2) is planned for June 2011 with the main EMIS report to be launched in Autumn 2011. GMHS and GHN will produce the country report for Ireland based on four themes to be launched in 2011 and 2012.

The CR1 Report and the report on using UNGASS indicators show the Republic of Ireland among the lead counties. Of the n=2194 the median age was 31, 33% had tested for HIV in the previous 12 Months, 6% of all respondents were HIV positive, 10% of all those who had tested for HIV. 93% of all respondents were knowledgeable about HIV, 57% were "out" about their sexuality while 53% were happy about their sex lives.

Another report based on the UNGASS indicators of those aged younger than 25 and those older; 63% of men under 25 had used condoms for anal sex in the last six months compared to 55% of those aged over 25. Importantly 55% of those under 25 and 68% of those over had been reached with HIV Prevention Programmes www.emis-project.eu.

SAKA: SYPHILIS AWARENESS KNOWLEDGE AND ACTIONS survey among MSM carried out during the summer of 2009. Of the 543 completed surveys 80% were collected in Dublin and 20% in Cork. The recommendations highlighted the need to inform MSM on syphilis transmission even if using condoms, the risk of HIV co-infection, and the need to test for syphilis at least once per year. Report available at http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/Sexualhealth/Gay_Men's_Health_Service/Research_Reports/

REAL LIVES 3: THE ALL IRELAND MSM INTERNET SURVEY 2007 AND 2008 Some initial findings from Real Lives 3 showed that 58% of MSM tested for HIV in 2008 up from 49% the previous year. A fuller report will be published in 2011 Available at www.gmhs.ie and www.ghn.ie

VISIBLE LIVES: GMHS was a member of the advisory committee for Visible Lives a research project to explore the lives, experience and needs of LGBT people aged over 55. The study was commissioned by GLEN and funded by Age and Opportunity. The report to be published in 2011. reference www.glen.ie.

GMHS MANAGEMENT

The work of the manager reflects the business of the service and involves the frontline delivery of the clinical services along with co-ordination, supervision and budgetary responsibility. Representation and involvement in both community and international networks and various committees such as NASC, the HSE LGBT Health Advisory committee. Involved in delivery of training to academic courses for social workers at UCD and Trinity colleges and also the promotion of research.

GMHS CLINIC DETAILS FOR 2010

The GMHS STI clinic operates on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at Baggot St Hospital, Dublin 4 and the doors open from 5pm to 7.45pm (the doctors see clients from 6pm to 8.30pm). The Multi Disciplinary Team provide a free, friendly, confidential and professional service which is very welcomed by clients. In 2010, over 4,273 men attended and first time clients accounted for 686, an increase of 5% over 2009. This brings to 7,961 the number of men who have registered at GMHS between January 1997 and December 2010.

NUMBERS FOR GMHS CLINIC IN 2010

100 Clinics 51 Tues and 49 Weds (2 less than 2009 due to St Patrick's Day and inclement weather in November) plus there were lower numbers in Dec due to weather.	3,304 Nursing Contacts +7% over 2009
686 First-Time Clients +5% over 2009	2,295 Syphilis Tests +16% over 2009
7,120 charts for medical administration (assemble charts, results, file etc) (includes 2,840 results sent by SMS)	2,089 HIV test +14% over 2009
4,273 client visits (2,259 Client Walk-ins and 1,921 Appointments) (2,060 Tues and 2,213 Weds)	850 Hepatitis B Tests 815 Hepatitis A Test 1,033 Hepatitis C Test sts 900 Post Hepatitis Vaccine Blood Test +18% 1,104 Hepatitis Vaccine
2,750 Medical Consultations / STI screens + 57% STI screens	725 Pre HIV Test Counselling sessions

DIAGNOSIS AT THE GMHS CLINIC 2010

There were approximately 267 positive diagnosis made up of the following: 170 STI diagnosis, 29 HIV diagnosis (1 % of all HIV tests), 68 treatable syphilis (3% of all syphilis tests). A significant percentage of men diagnosed were aged 29 and younger. While a quarter or more of those diagnosed with Syphilis or an STI were aged 24 and younger.

AGE RANGE	<24	25 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50>
STIs n=170	50 (29%)	45 (26%)	52 (31%)	10 (6%)	13 (8%)
Syphilis n=68	15 (22%)	15 (22%)	24 (35%)	10 (15%)	4 (4%)
HIV n=29	2 (7%)	11 (38%)	10 (34%)	4 (14%)	2 (2%)

A very low number had dual or multiple diagnosis. A significant number of those receiving a diagnosis, (39% STIs, 48% HIV and 46% syphilis), were first time attendees to the clinic and this is expanded on in the next section.

PROFILES OF FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

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

AGE PROFILE OF NEW ATTENDEES

245 of the new attendees were aged 24 and younger a very significant (61%) increase among this age group when compared to 2009.

AGE RANGE	<20	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60>
2010 n=686	39 (6%)	206 (30%)	185 (27%)	165 (24%)	55 (8%)	25 (4%)	11 (2%)
2009 n=655	16 (3%)	136 (21%)	198 (30%)	198 (30%)	72 (11%)	22 (3%)	13 (2%)

PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=684)

Most of the new attendees, 579 (85%), resided in Dublin city and county, with a significant number 105 (15%) living in other parts of Ireland.

ETHNIC AND CULTURAL PROFILES (N=686)

As with previous years over one in three new attendees (244) were born outside the Island of Ireland, with 6% of these living outside Dublin city and county. Over 50 countries were represented.

WHERE BORN	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Island of Ireland	69%	63%	64%	65%	64%
Abroad	31%	37%	36%	35%	36%

FIRST TIME ATTENDEES TO GMHS AND DIAGNOSIS

In 2010 over 110 (16%) of the 686 first time attendees received a diagnosis. 65 (10%) received an STI diagnosis (CT or GC), 31 (5%) had infectious treatable syphilis a similar number to 2009, while 14 (2%) had a positive HIV diagnoses slightly lower than 2009.

Nearly half of those diagnosed with an STI were aged 24 and younger with nearly three quarters aged 29 and younger. While over a third of those treated for Syphilis were aged 29 and younger. The cohort for HIV diagnosis were all aged over 30.

n=686	<24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50>
STIs n=65	30 (46%)	16 (25%)	16 (25%)	1 (2%)	2 (3%)
Syphilis n=31	5 (16%)	7 (23%)	14 (45%)	4 (13%)	1 (3%)
HIV n=14	Nil	Nil	9 (64%)	4 (29%)	1 (7%)

PREVALENCE BY AGE

The prevalence rate within each age group compared to the overall rate (in the left column) provides a clearer indication. I.E. 12% of those aged 24 and less received an STI diagnosis while 2% were treated for syphilis.

2010 n=686	<24 (n=245)	25-29 (n=185)	30-39 (n=165)	40-49 (n=55)	50> (n=36)
Syphilis n=31 (5%)	5(2%)	7(4%)	14(9%)	4(7%)	1(3%)
STIs n=65 (10%)	30(12%)	16(9%)	16(10%)	1(2%)	2(6%)
HIV n=14 (2%)	Nil	Nil	9(6%)	4(7%)	1(3%)

IMPLICATIONS:

The STI and syphilis prevalence rate among the younger age group perhaps reflects the increase in uptake of the GMHS service by this group and also highlights the need for on going targeted information.

This report combined with research findings and the reports by the HPSC clearly shows that sexual health awareness and testing has to be included with HIV education and prevention and importantly to be maintained and expanded on.

GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE

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