

Introducing a new sexually transmissible infections contact tracing resource for use in NSW General Practice

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In Australia, general practice is the main provider of sexual health care¹ and contact tracing is an important part of a comprehensive control program for sexually transmissible infections (STI). However, many doctors are unaware of their responsibilities regarding contact tracing² and identify barriers to undertaking this, for example, lack of written guidelines, and a perceived lack of skills and experience.³

A new practical A4 double-sided clinical resource, the *STI Contact Tracing Tool for General Practice*, is now available. This quick reference guide assists providers in understanding their STI contact tracing responsibilities, the steps to be followed in contact tracing to ensure best practice and the key points in the management of STI contacts. It also answers the common questions asked about STI contact tracing, including how far back in time to trace. The Tool and online order form are available from: www.stipu.nsw.gov.au.

Helping patients with STI contact tracing

Most people diagnosed with an STI feel that informing their sexual partner/s is the 'right thing to do'; consequently, they are not likely to be surprised when the general practitioner (GP) introduces contact tracing during the consultation.⁴ Most people choose to notify their own partner/s and it is useful to let them know that the GP or practice staff will follow up with them about this, either by phone or at the next visit.⁵ If they have not been able to inform their partner/s, the practice can offer further assistance. Studies suggest that the expectation of follow up from GP or practice staff increases the rate of partner notification.⁶

There are a number of additional online resources for both patient and provider that can assist with contact tracing (Box 1). These resources allow the patient to inform a partner by letter, email or SMS, which can be anonymous depending on the patient's preferences.

Box 1. Online resources to assist patients and providers with contact tracing for STIs

Patient online resources

- <http://www.letthemknow.org.au> – Information and practical tips for patients. Offers the option of notifying contacts via email, SMS or letter.
- www.thedramadownunder.info – For men who have sex with men. Offers the option of notifying contacts via email or SMS.

Provider online resources

- Australasian Contact Tracing Manual (<http://ctm.ashm.org.au/>) – Best practice for contact tracing in Australasia in an easy-to-use online format.
- GP NSW Contact Tracing page (www.gpnsw.com.au/programs/sexually-transmitted-infections-sti/contact-tracing) – Contains contact tracing letters that can be downloaded into general practice software programs.

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