Healthcare Innovations How practice has changed

HERSTON HEALTH PRECINCT SYMPOSIUM 2021

6 - 10 September 2021 **Education Centre** RBWH

TRAN-0009

Ella Trembizki¹, Amy Jennison², David Whiley^{1,3}.

1. UQ Centre for Clinical Research 2. Public Health Microbiology, Queensland Health 3. Pathology Queensland

Title: A changing landscape of Neisseria gonorrhoeae genotypes in Queensland

Background and Purpose. In Australia, rates of *Neisseria* gonorrhoeae (NG) notifications are increasing each year. Queensland (Qld) is regionally versatile, with significant variation in Neisseria gonorrhoeae (NG) rates and rates of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) throughout the various regions, particularly due to ≈70% of notifications not being sent for bacterial culture and in turn no AMR data acquired. Further, recent data indicates a sharp rise of NG in women. Accordingly, we sought to examine the differences in NG transmission and circulating strains throughout Qld between two yearly snapshots of 2012 and 2018.

Methods. Old NG Isolates from the years 2012 (first 6 months; n=327) and 2018 (n=1,211) were genotyped to inform multi locus sequence type (MLST) and AMR determinants. The results of the above were combined to define a genotype, and its changes in Qld distribution were assessed throughout South East Queensland (SEQ) in comparison to 'Other' Qld regions (North/Far North/Regional).

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Results. Overall, n=139 Qld genotypes were observed: Fig1a represent the proportion of the genotypes most common Qld01-Qld022 comprising 82.5% of the tested isolates (genotypes comprising ≥ 10 isolates; n=1,260), and all others comprising the remainder 17.5% (n=267). An expansion in genotypes associated with heterosexual cases was observed, specifically Qld02, which comprises near equal male/female ratios (Fig1b) significantly expanded between 2012 and 2018 into 'Other' regions (Fig1c; p<0.05;95% CI). Further Qld04 primarily found in SEQ in 2012 (89%), comprising n=1 female and n=35 males, had significantly expanded to 'other' regions by 2018 (Fig1c; p<0.05;95% CI), with females comprising a third of the genotype (Fig1b). The most common genotype, Qld01, was not present in our 2012 isolate population, and had spiked to 188 isolates by 2018 (Fig1a; p<0.05; 95% CI), with SEQ male majority.

Conclusion. These data reinforce the changing landscape in NG transmission dynamics and the need for enhanced surveillance throughout the state to capture important epidemiological shifts. This is particularly crucial in urban (SEQ) women and remote/regional Qld where 70% of the state's notification arise, yet bacterial culture isolation rates are low.

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