

NO QUESTION TOO AWKWARD: NURSE NETTIE, THE ONLINE SEXUAL HEALTH NURSE

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Introduction: Young people are often embarrassed to seek sexual health advice from parents and doctors, which means many questions go unanswered and creates a barrier to STI testing. Online platforms are well suited to providing sexual health information and advice because they are accessible, affordable and anonymous. So a confidential online information service for young people, 'Nurse Nettie' was established on the *Play Safe* website www.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au to bridge the information and access gap, enable young people to ask questions and to receive a personal email answer within 24 hours. Information and advice is tailored to the individual and provides direct links to local testing services or other referral pathways based on users' postcodes.

Methods: We undertook a retrospective review of Nurse Nettie questions asked between April 2014 and March 2016. Analysis included service user demographics and question categorisation to identify key topic areas.

Results: Between April 2014 and March 2016, Nurse Nettie received 762 questions with a 56% increase between Year 1 (n=297) and Year 2 (n=465). Overall, 50% of users were males, 40% females and 10% transgender people. 79% of questions were from young people (<29 years). The top three question categories were: symptoms (17%), STI/HIV testing (15%) and STI/HIV risk (13%). The proportion of questions categorised as non-genuine was 5%.

Conclusion: By embracing the potential of digital technology, 'Nurse Nettie' has allowed a larger number of young people to receive tailored information about their sexual health in a convenient, confidential and trusted way, in line with the goals of the NSW STI Strategy 2016-2020. The data captured allows for continued analysis and tailored sexual health prevention work.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Nothing to disclose.