



Women's Initiative for Sexual
Health, Education, and Raising
awareness of anal cancer

A **WISER** way to support women with anal cancer

Mary Hayes

Cancer Nurse & Research Fellow



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

CCRU

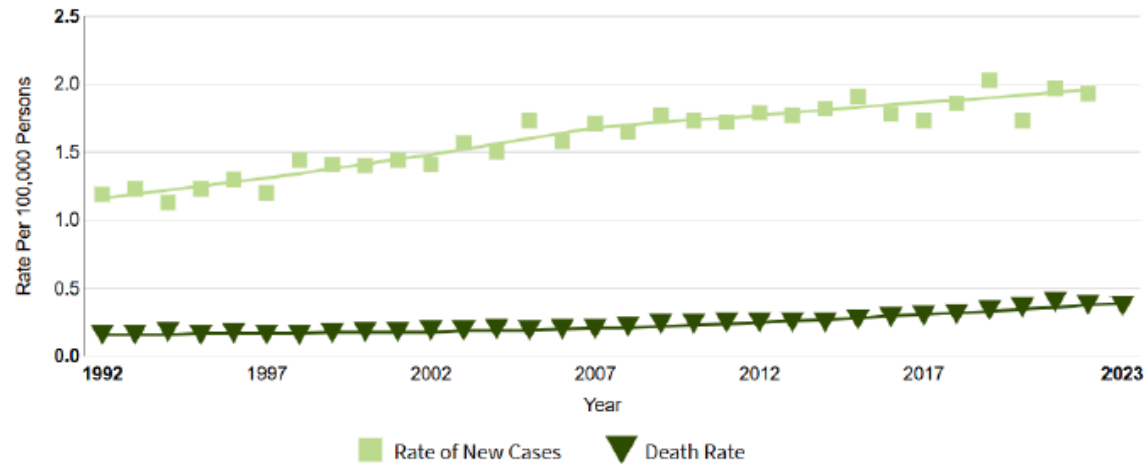
Cancer Care
Research Unit

Disclosures

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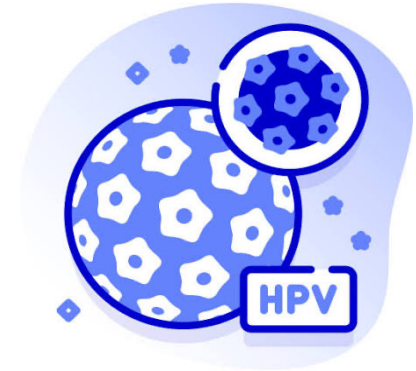
- NHMRC Targeted Call for Research
- St. Vincent's Curran Foundation
- Australian Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology (ASCCP)

The current landscape



Source: National Cancer Institute

5-year overall survival rates now > 70%



Myths & Misconceptions



Anal cancer is only a concern for MSM



Anal cancer is caused by receptive anal sex



HPV can spread systemically around the body

Treatment-related side effects

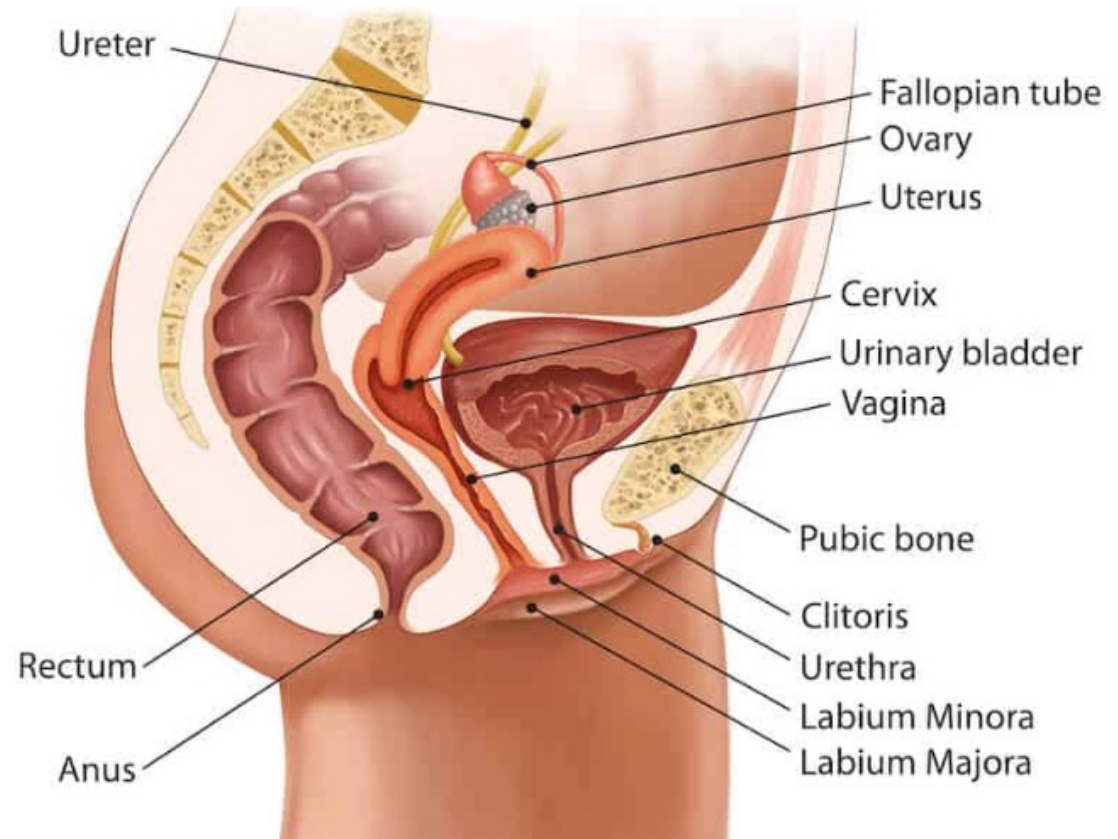
Physical

Psychological

Physiological

Social

Psychosexual





Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Access to sexual **and** reproductive health services is a human right and should be available to all people throughout their lives, as part of ensuring universal health coverage.

This not only contributes to improved health outcomes, but also to gender equality and wider development.

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What did the women tell us?

"I didn't realise what I would be dealing with forever. Like, I had no idea. No idea."

Mary

"We tried other things apart from intercourse but I always feel dirty... I have to shower first because sometimes the skin around the anus weeps, or it breaks and I bleed."

Annie

"I was just given the dilators with no instructions of how to use them. Nothing. So, I didn't use them."

Liz

"Five years after treatment... my vagina was not fit for purpose anymore."

Lily

"My husband deserves better... he should be married to someone who can make him happy. We're only 62."

Jude

”

“

What did cancer nurses tell us?

"We wouldn't want people doing too much dilating beforehand... we wouldn't want them to be worried about that. We need to get them through the treatment."

"I give [another resource] to *some patients* who ask questions or whatever else, but not everybody."

"There are some ladies who this might be a focus for so that's when I *might* talk to them about the future of this."

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To **address** the unmet sexual health information needs of women with anal cancer

- Patient information resource
- Implementation toolkit

Tailored to HCPs working in radiation oncology but **all nurses welcome** to participate in implementation training.

1. Introduction

This booklet is designed by women for women who have lived experience of Anal Cancer. Its purpose is to provide you with helpful and practical information about vaginal and sexual health throughout your disease trajectory and into recovery. While this booklet will touch on general information, accompanying resources from Cancer Council Australia and Cancer Society New Zealand explore general aspects of cancer treatment such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy in more detail.



How do I use this booklet?

This booklet aims to provide women with information to manage the side effects of treatment for anal cancer; specifically, the impact on sexual health, sexual function and intimacy.

It has been designed to supplement existing resources from Cancer Council Australia and the Cancer Society of New Zealand which are listed on page 8 of this booklet.

A Guide for Women

Diagnosis

Treatment

Recovery

Emily's Story...

"On the second last day of my treatment, I was handed a box of dilators and told 'use these for a few months'. That was really all the information I got. When I went home, I didn't even know where to start with it."

Without being taught or shown how to use the dilators, Emily thought they must not be that important. However, several months later when Emily and her husband resumed sexual activity, they were unable to have intercourse. Emily felt like her vagina had "closed up". After several appointments with her treating team, GP and gynaecology specialists, Emily and her partner were advised that the radiation had caused irreversible damage to her vagina. This was devastating news for a couple who had a very active sex life before her diagnosis.

"We've got lots of sex in the bank from over 40 years together but we both acknowledged that we really, really miss it."

Key take-aways:

- Regardless of your sexual orientation, gender, or relationship status, you should consider vaginal dilators an essential and important part of your recovery for your overall health.
- Vaginal moisturizers and lubricants are not the same and should be used at separate times.

Implementation training toolkit

- Slide deck
- Practical training session
- Resource hub
- Access to more comprehensive training in sexual health, broadly (SexFICC)

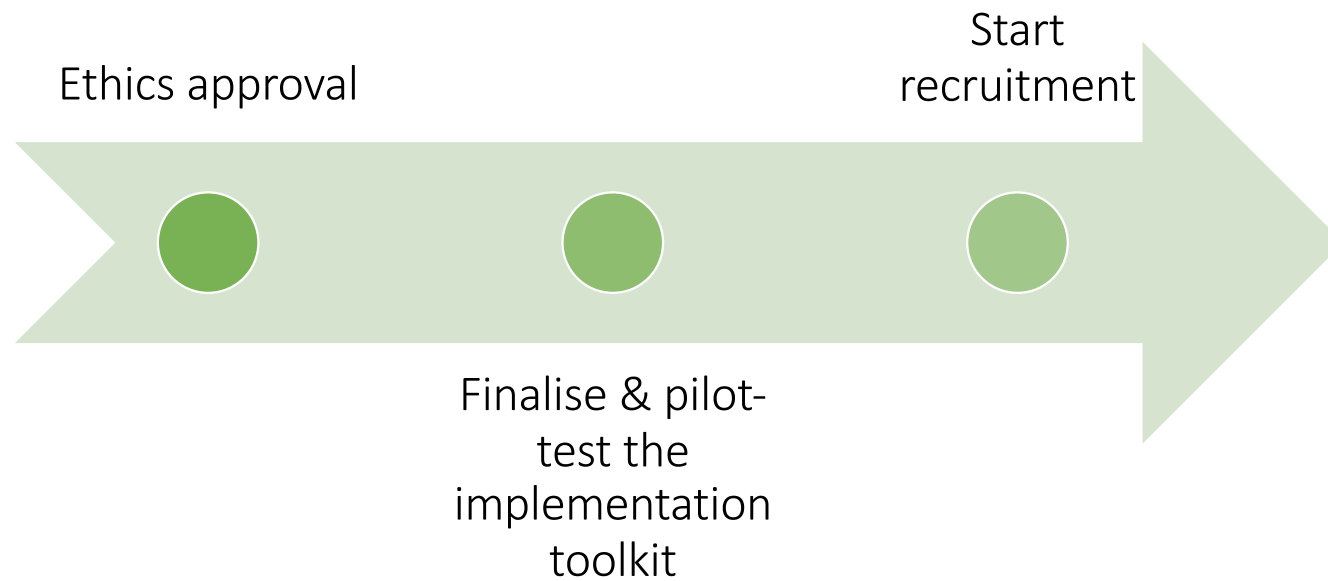
Data collection

Consumer participants	
Outcomes assessed	Timepoint
QOL	Baseline, 3-months post, 12-months post
Sexual health	Baseline, 1-month post, 6-months post, 12-months post
Information needs	Baseline, 3-months post,
Feasibility questionnaire	6-months post

Healthcare professional participants	
Outcomes assessed	Timepoint
Knowledge and confidence	Baseline, post-implementation training, end of study
Acceptability & usability	Post-intervention delivery

Target: 50 participants over 18 months

Next steps



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