

40

**YEARS OF
SERVICE!**



ANNUAL REPORT 2013

Hassle Free Clinic

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hasslefreeclinic.org



Hassle Free Clinic

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hassle Free Clinic marked its 40th year of service in 2013; an amazing accomplishment for a community-based organization from such humble beginnings. I am proud but not happy to be writing this President's Message. This is the first time in 16 years that Peter Bochove's name will not appear in this report. He joined the Board in 1997 and served as President since 2005. Peter died last April and is still missed. In his honour, we have re-named our Bathhouse Program the Peter Bochove Bath Outreach Program, a small tribute to a larger-than-life volunteer and friend of Hassle Free.

The Board of Directors decided to undertake a structural review of the Clinic in 2012 and in 2013 it was completed and implemented. There was a desire to modernize the organizational configuration of Hassle Free to better reflect the operational realities of a busy urban sexual health clinic.

We are pleased that there are now current job descriptions a new Personnel Manual that complies with all applicable legislation as well as a more formal organizational structure that provides more clarity to staff, clients and funders. With the Board's full confidence and support the Clinic is now supervised by two Directors, Jane Greer and Leo Mitterni, who provide the operational, clinical and policy direction for Hassle Free.

The number of clients we serve in-clinic remains pretty stable from year to year as we are generally at capacity. In part to address our capacity issues, this year we were able to 'take our show on the road' by creating external testing sites in the City, specifically for gay men, men who have sex with men and trans clients. At the end of the year, we had three ongoing external sites and had completed some special-event testing at the request of AIDS Service Organizations. Response to these testing sites has been extremely positive.

Hassle Free Clinic will continue to evolve and change in order to better serve our clients. We are proud of our legacy of service since 1973, and our growing role as leaders in developing sexual health policy and educational programming in Canada.

Chris Phibbs

Board of Directors

Chris Phibbs: President
Warren Ross: Vice-President
maxine bailey
Nicole Greenspan
Corinne Hart
Sherri Helsdingen
Rob Howe
Rajendra Maharaj

MANY THANKS
TO THE
HASSLE FREE CLINIC
BOARD MEMBERS
VOLUNTEERS &
PHYSICIANS OF 2013!

Volunteers of 2013

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Michael Baker
Aisha Bartholomew
Ronald Benedetti
Alexandra Bieg
Afra Boissevain
Robert Booth
Chèran Carty
Micaela Collins
Alexandra Conchie
Bisa Dobson
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Fiona Sillars
Harvey St. Amant
Dr. Howard Song
Maggie Szpakowska
Gordon Taylor
Stephanie Thome
Michael Tomlin
Tara Victoria Holder
Stephen Westfall
Thomas White
Zoe Winterton-Perks

CLINIC STAFF

Co-Directors

Jane Greer
Leo Mitterni

Staff

Anisha Abdulla
Elmer Bagares
Shawn Fowler
Esther Guzha
Heather Jamieson
Jerry Juzkiw
Amy Lin
Maria Maksymiw
Tara McKee
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Sarah Siddiqui
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Zavaré Tengra
Rahim Thawer
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Loudes Alexandar
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Michael Baker
Hilary Cooper
Angelo Cruz
Brendan Curran
Andrew Eo
Jason Haines
René Lopez Torres
Betty Parish
Leonard Tooley
Fernanda Villanueva
Thomas White

Public Health Nurses

Martin Duschesne
Wendy Johnston

Men's/Trans' Clinic Physicians

Edward Lee (Medical Director)
Kelly Anderson
Arlene Chan
Michael Bartucci
Evan Collins
J. Troy Grennan
Charlie Guiang
Karen Jang
Fareen Karachiwalla
David Knox
Karen Ko
Pamela Leece
Allison McGee
Hamidah Meghani
Brian Minnema
Patricia Parsons
Gabriel Rebick
Kate Reeve
Malika Sharma
Howard Song
Itamar Tamari
Darrell Tan
Kent To

Women's/Trans' Clinic Physicians

Nina Malayil (Medical Director)
Kelly Anderson
Erin Johnston
Monika Kapoor
Jane Kiraly
Sarah Mahmoud
Zeenat Patel
Malika Sharma
Brigit Swenson
Rachel Vogler
Sheila Wijayasinghe
Laura Winer

HASSLE FREE CLINIC SERVICES:

- Confidential Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) counselling testing and treatment
- Rapid Point-of-Care (POC) and standard Anonymous HIV antibody testing with pre- and post-testing counselling
- Safer sex counselling
- Birth control methods & information
- Pregnancy testing, decision counselling, abortion referrals & follow-up
- HIV support for newly diagnosed individuals
- Health Promotion/Nursing Clinic for HIV+ women

WHO WE ARE...

Hassle Free Clinic is a community-based agency providing medical and counselling services in all areas of sexual health. We are one of the busiest sexual health clinics and the largest Anonymous HIV test site in Canada.

Hassle Free Clinic has separate hours for men and women at the same location. Transgendered clients can attend during the hours they feel most comfortable. The Men/Trans Clinic provides Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) testing/treatment and HIV testing, counselling and support. The Women/Trans Clinic provides the same STI/HIV services as well as birth control, pregnancy testing, abortion referrals and other services related to sexual and reproductive health. Each clinic is staffed by doctors, clinicians, counsellors and volunteers. A City of Toronto Public Health Nurse is assigned to work during the Men/Trans Clinic hours. Testing is done at the Ministry of Health Laboratory and through a private lab. The Ministry provides treatments for most STIs free of charge.

The clinic has always promoted an integrated, comprehensive approach to service delivery. A full spectrum of sexual health issues – HIV, STI, birth control and pregnancy – may be dealt with at the same time, rather than dividing sexual health care into separate services.

Most importantly, we ensure that service delivery is informed by a non-judgmental, supportive attitude towards all sexual health concerns. We believe active client involvement in health care decision making is paramount. Therefore, we provide appropriate counselling and education to help clients make well-informed decisions.

The clinic is incorporated as a non-profit charitable organization with a nine-member community Board of Directors. The Board takes responsibility for overall financial and policy direction while allowing staff to make program and policy decisions.

The clinic is core-funded by the City of Toronto Public Health Division with additional funding from the AIDS Bureau, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. The clinic also accesses the provincial STI billing program, a part of OHIP that does not require health cards.

We would particularly like to acknowledge and thank the many individual donors we have, primarily grateful clients. The amounts can be large or small, but we appreciate all of these donations, many of which are made anonymously.

WE ALSO PROVIDE:

- Bathhouse & community outreach testing
- Hepatitis A & B vaccination
- Presentations to community groups, agencies, organizations and at conferences
- Referrals to HIV specialists, gynecologists, midwives, therapists, counsellors, AIDS service organizations (ASOs), and health and social services
- Services are provided in several different languages. Please call for information 416-922-0566

40 YEARS OF HISTORY!

LOOKING BACK...

- Starting from grassroots initiatives and growing while maintaining its community-based approach to sexual health care. Hassle Free Clinic celebrates its 40th year of operation!
- Hassle Free Clinic's location has changed several times to meet the needs of our perpetually growing and ever changing population. Our present location is wheelchair accessible.

History of Hassle Free Clinic

The main inspiration for Hassle Free came in part from the staff at the Rochdale Free Clinic. Hassle Free officially began operating in February 1973, when counsellors from Rochdale opened a 24-hour, 7 days a week street clinic on Yonge Street. The clinic was funded by a grant from the federal government's Local Initiatives Project, and offered drug crisis counselling and treatment in a discreet and non-judgmental manner as our name suggests.

By 1975, the drug-oriented street scene had largely disappeared. Meanwhile, the clinic had built a reputation for providing "hassle-free" medical care, particularly STI and birth control services. A small but significant step was taken in 1977 when the clinic's global budget was covered by a shared cost grant from the Ontario Ministry of Health and the City of Toronto Board of Health. The grant came as a dramatic last-minute intervention, when the clinic had exhausted its funds and was faced with imminent closure.

In January 1980, when Hassle Free Clinic moved to our previous location at 556 Church Street, it was reorganized into separate men's and women's hours. The separation was the result of increasing numbers of male (mostly gay) clients and limited space, making it difficult to serve men and women at the same time. By the early 1980s the reputation of the Men's clinic as a safe place for gay men to obtain sexual health services was well established, although in fact we have always served large numbers of heterosexual men. The majority of women seeking services are heterosexual. From the early days, staff had also identified some of the unique sexual health needs of transgendered and gender fluid clients. This has now been translated into a comprehensive program of trans inclusivity.

Following the first wave of the AIDS crisis in 1983-84, the clinic began offering HIV education and prevention counselling. When HIV testing became available in 1985, the clinic immediately offered testing on an anonymous basis. At this time “anonymous” testing was illegal in Ontario. The number of male clients testing positive for HIV increased each year, reaching a peak of 230 in 1990. The seropositive rate in the Women’s Clinic was low and remained stable during this period. In the late 1980s, the clinic introduced HIV positive support group programs for women and men which were well received by clients, and highly regarded by other health providers.

In 1989 the clinic mounted a campaign to legalize anonymous testing. Under pressure from community organizations, Toronto City Council and the Board of Health publicly endorsed the program. The Ontario Ministry of Health, however, refused to support the program until January 1992, when the NDP government legalized anonymous testing. Having offered anonymous HIV testing for the previous seven years, HFC was relied on to develop Ontario’s Anonymous Testing Guidelines and train staff in designated sites across the Province.

In 2001, Hassle Free became the first clinic in Canada to offer rapid point-of-care (POC) HIV testing on site, which was halted due to questions about the accuracy of the device. In May 2006, HFC once again became the first clinic in Canada to offer such testing with a newly approved device. This device has proven to provide consistently accurate results since that time. It is 99.5% accurate, similar to standard laboratory testing. Results are ready in a few minutes as opposed to waiting a week or two with the standard method. Individuals still have the choice of choosing either testing method but the vast majority of individuals choose rapid POC testing for obvious reasons. Based on our experience with POC

... LEADING THE WAY

- Did you know Hassle Free Clinic was one of the early responders at the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic?
- Did you know Hassle Free Clinic was the first in Ontario to offer “illegal” anonymous HIV testing?
- Did you know Hassle Free Clinic was the first clinic in Canada to offer rapid point-of-care HIV testing?
- Hassle Free Clinic often provides training and support to other agencies interested providing rapid point-of-care HIV testing

“Thank you so much for helping me when I needed some help. I greatly appreciate it. I know I am not your usual target group – so please put this donation to good use so I won’t feel bad about taking your resources”

“Thank you for your kindness and consideration through a very difficult time. I can’t express how much I appreciate the caring and understanding you showed me”

– Quotes from
Hassle Free Clinic clients

testing and our lobbying efforts, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced in 2007 that it would be making POC tests available at designated sites across Ontario

Another focus has been trans inclusivity at the clinic. With this goal in mind, we have redesigned our intake sheets, client service brochures, hour slips, data collection systems, STI information sheets, website and waiting room. Physician, staff and volunteer training about trans care is an ongoing process.

Since the beginning, Hassle Free Clinic has played an important front-line role in identifying and serving the sexual health needs of a large and diverse at-risk population. We are increasingly called upon as consultants in developing health policy and educational programming. Without compromising our front-line status, we are now firmly established as a partner in Toronto Public Health’s sexual health program, as well as the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s HIV testing program.

After 40 years of providing medical care to high-risk clients in a non-traditional setting, we are proud to be one of Canada’s largest and most influential sexual health clinics!



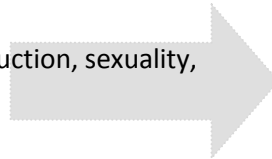
**IN MEMORY OF ROBERT TROW
NOVEMBER 23, 1948 – OCTOBER 21, 2002**

Robert Trow will always be remembered as one of the pioneer advocates of anonymous HIV testing, leader within the AIDS movement and his important role within Hassle Free Clinic’s history.

Hassle Free Clinic Philosophy

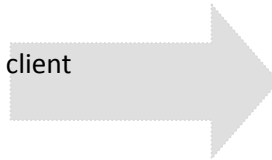
Hassle Free Clinic places great importance on maintaining equitable staff-client relationships and non-judgmental attitude to sexually related health concerns. The Clinic is committed to maintaining the following values and principles in the provision of sexual health care:

Complete and understandable information about reproduction, sexuality, birth control and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)



INFORMATIVE

Confidential STI testing and treatment, with emphasis on client responsibility for follow-up and informing contacts



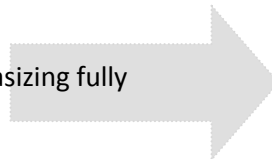
CONFIDENTIALITY

Access to Anonymous HIV counselling, testing and support



ACCESSIBILITY

Active client involvement in health care decisions, emphasizing fully informed choice



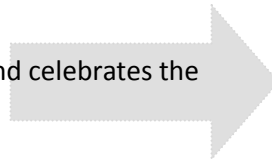
INFORMED CHOICE

Medical treatment and counselling provided in a respectful, non-judgmental manner



RESPECT

Work from anti-oppression framework that recognizes and celebrates the wide diversity of Toronto's communities



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

HASSLE FREE CLINIC'S CORE VALUES

RESEARCH STUDIES

Cluster Study: Linking Molecular
and Social Cluster Analyses in
HIV transmission

Mycoplasma Genitalium Study

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)
Study

Urinary HIV Biomarkers Profile
Study

Research Studies

Hassle Free is often invited to be involved in research related to sexual health matters. The Clinic continued to be involved with a study entitled “Linking Molecular and Social Clusters in Analyses on HIV Transmission,” with funding due to end in March, 2014. The purpose of this study is to see how HIV viruses from different people can be found in similar places. By interviewing recently diagnosed HIV individuals in the hopes of better understanding the social relationships and characteristics of people who are testing positive. It is hoped that this study will help develop focused and effective HIV prevention programs.

We were also involved in a study funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation collecting urine samples with the goal of developing an early detection HIV urine test. The primary purpose of this study is to collect enough urine to refine a test based on measurements of compounds in urine that can identify early and long term HIV infection. The clinic recruited 60 participants; 30 recent seroconverters and 30 HIV negative patients, who each had to have four study visits at the clinic, for which they were properly compensated.

Hassle Free also worked with the Public Health Ontario Laboratory doing a time-limited prevalence study of Mycoplasma genitalium (Mg). There is no test for Mg widely available in Ontario, but for the purposes of assessing prevalence, a urine test was made available on a limited basis to Hassle Free Clinic. Based on international literature, it is believed that Mg is infectious and can have sequelae similar to untreated chlamydia or gonorrhoea. There were 1,200 participants in the study, with 50 positive tests and 8 inconclusive. We recommended treatment for those testing positive and did follow up testing to ensure adequate treatment.

Last year the clinic was involved in a survey on knowledge and attitudes about PrEP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV) among gay men and MSM. PrEP is a one-pill a day regimen taken by HIV negative individuals that has been shown to prevent HIV transmission. As a follow-up to that survey, St. Michael's Hospital has received funding to follow 50 at-risk men over a year on PrEP. Although its prohibitive cost probably means limited application, (approximately \$900 per month) it will provide another prevention option for some individuals.

Student Placement & Training

Clinical health education is an important part of our commitment to community education. The clinic often supervises residents, nursing and medical students from several institutions. Most notably, the clinic often has nursing students taking part in their practicum placement within the clinic. Students gain valuable sexual health and community based work experience. Over the years, the clinic has had many excellent students and over time, several have been recruited to work as relief, as well as for outreach and our bathhouse programs. Likewise, some residents proceed to be employed in our clinics.

Frequently, we also have staff from various agencies attend the clinic for observation and training, particularly around rapid HIV POC counselling and testing.

Creating greater clarity and accountability to our clients, communities and funders

Year in Review

Organizational Restructuring

In April of this year, the Board of Directors voted to implement all of the recommendations put forward by the Human Resource Consultant they had hired in 2012.

These recommendations were wide ranging and affected all aspects of human resource management. The collective structure was abolished, being replaced by two Directors (Operations and Administration). The Directors were also made responsible for management and supervision in the Men/Trans and Women/Trans clinics respectively.

The Consultant assisted in the development of job descriptions, creatively using a matrix to identify both the common elements of our work and those unique to different individuals. Our Personnel Policy was updated, making us compliant with all applicable legislation and creating a consistency in policies that is now clinic-wide. All permanent employees have now signed Employment Contracts, formally agreeing to comply with all parts of the Personnel Policy. For a change process, it went remarkably smoothly. It was change that had been under discussion for many years and therefore seemed to be well-accepted.

This re-structuring has given the Clinic a stronger foundation to continue to grow and create innovation in the delivery of sexual health services.

Enhanced Testing Program

This year saw the full implementation of our satellite HIV testing program for gay men, men who have sex with men and trans folks across the city. This welcome initiative is funded solely by the AIDS Bureau.



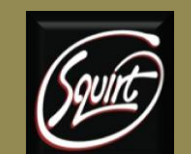
The Enhanced Testing program builds on the strength and momentum of the Testing Blitz of 2011-2012 and incorporates the same presence online, within social media, and on “hook-up” apps popular amongst MSM. Key messages of the Blitz promotion campaign, including awareness of seroconversion illness, early HIV testing and the relationship between STI’s and HIV infection, as well as the website come-on-in.ca and accompanying images and materials continue to be a large part of the program’s promotion.

We are now offering clinics twice-monthly at St. Stephen’s Community House in the City’s west end (Kensington Market), and South Riverdale Community Health Centre in the east (Leslieville). We are also at the 519 Church St. Community Centre twice weekly. These clinics have been extremely well attended and well received. Hassle Free Clinic is now able to offer at risk men more choice in where, when and how they test, and provide an important solution to the overflow of demand for in-clinic testing.

In addition to our regular testing sites, we also completed a 10 week testing program with the AIDS Committee of Toronto, and provided ‘special event’ testing for the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention and Asian Community AIDS Services.

Moving forward, we intend to continue this program in our current locations, as well as filling requests for one-time clinics. We also hope to expand ‘Come-on-in’ to include information specific to MSM & trans sexual health, including PEP, and the increase of rectal infections.

This funding also allowed us to (almost) complete two major infrastructure projects. Our new and improved website will be launched in 2014, along with mobile capability, making information about the Clinic and our services more accessible. We have also been working to update our patient database, to ensure accurate and streamlined record keeping and statistics collection.



Did you know?

- Ontario positivity rates at Anonymous Test Sites is approximately 3 times greater than in other forms of testing (Nominal or Non-nominal).
- Ontario has one of the highest pre-natal testing rates in Canada based on a client-centred, express consent policy
- 1 in 120 adults in Toronto are HIV positive
- Women represent 1 in 5 new HIV diagnoses in Toronto

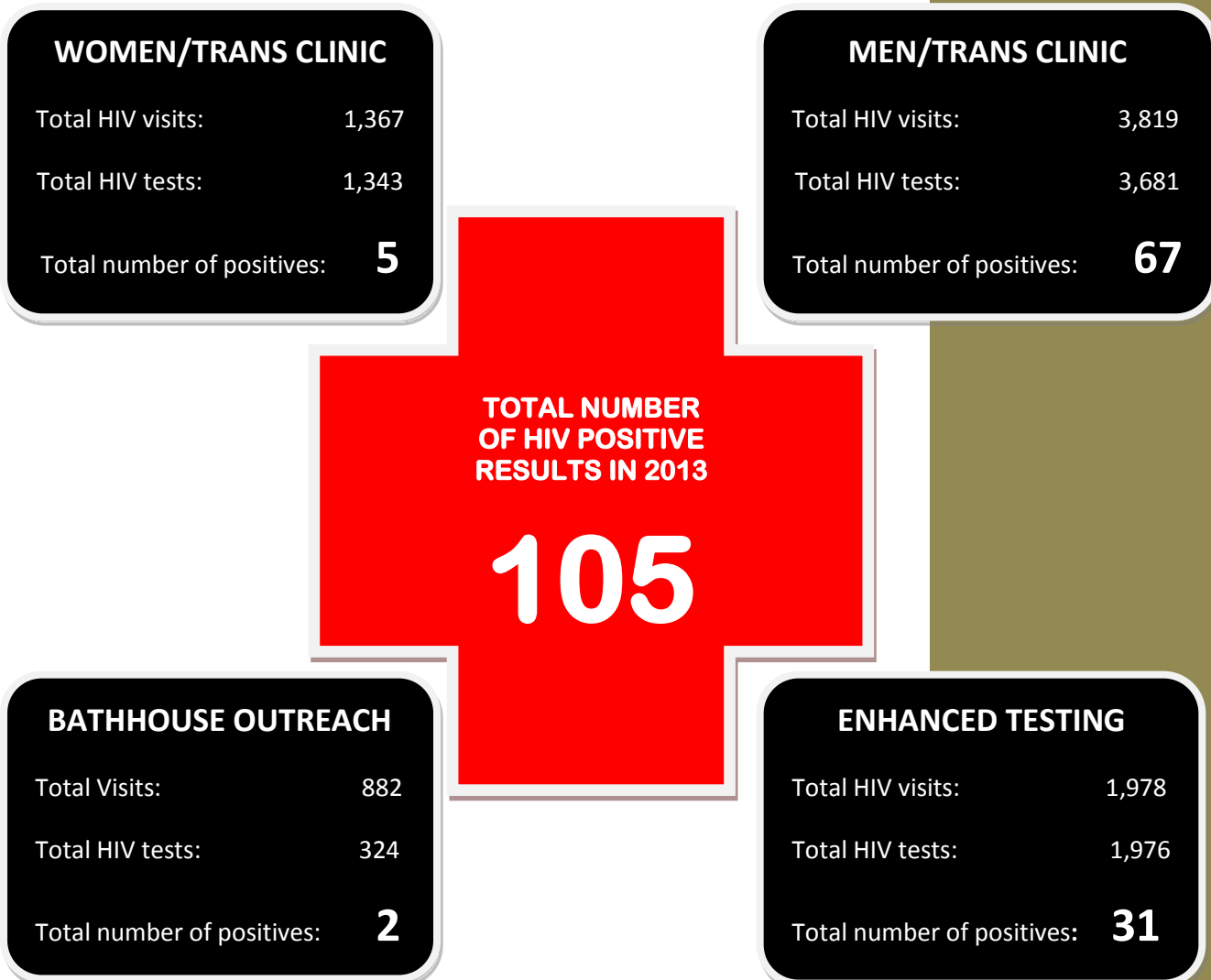
Anonymous HIV Testing Program

Anonymous and POC HIV testing continue to be the clinic's best-known programs. Counselling focuses on HIV transmission, willingness and ability to practice safer sex, identifying barriers to safer sex practices, and a rational understanding of relative risk. The impact of testing positive and dealing with an HIV positive result are discussed. As in all sexual health counselling, STI, birth control, pregnancy, assault and abuse issues are dealt with as appropriate.

A continuing trend with clients is HIV anxiety unrelated to risk. We regularly see clients who have out-of-control anxiety about being infected with no real risk. Clients are not refused testing, except where too-frequent testing is contributing to their anxiety. Counselling these clients has become easier with the introduction of counselling guidelines developed by the High Anxiety No/Low Risk (HANLR) Working Group.

Usually, HIV testing is conducted by appointment only. This is to ensure that adequate time is allotted for a potential positive result, as well as to ensure proper consent, counselling, and referrals. However, the clinic continues to offer walk-in HIV POC tests for individuals with extenuating circumstances. The Men/Trans Clinic offers immediate POC tests for all suspected and confirmed syphilis cases. This continues to be a challenge given the on-going syphilis epidemic. It is particularly important for patient care however, as syphilis treatment is different for HIV positive individuals.

The total number of HIV visits for the year in the women/trans clinic was 1,367 and 3,819 in the men/trans clinic for a grand total of 5,186. The total number of HIV positive results remained relatively consistent from previous years. The previous year, we reported 92 positive tests compared to 105 in 2013. There was a slight decrease in number of women who tested HIV positive; with 5 new cases among heterosexual women. Women represent 1 in 5 new HIV diagnoses in Toronto. There were a total of 100 positive HIV results from the Men & Trans clinic. This number includes 2 positives from Bath houses and 31 from the HIV/Syphilis Enhanced Testing Program.



Sexual Health Program

The number of sexual health (non-HIV) visits for each clinic has steadily increased by approximately 2,000 since 2009. As we are at capacity, the number stabilized in 2013. STI positivity rates have also remained relatively stable.

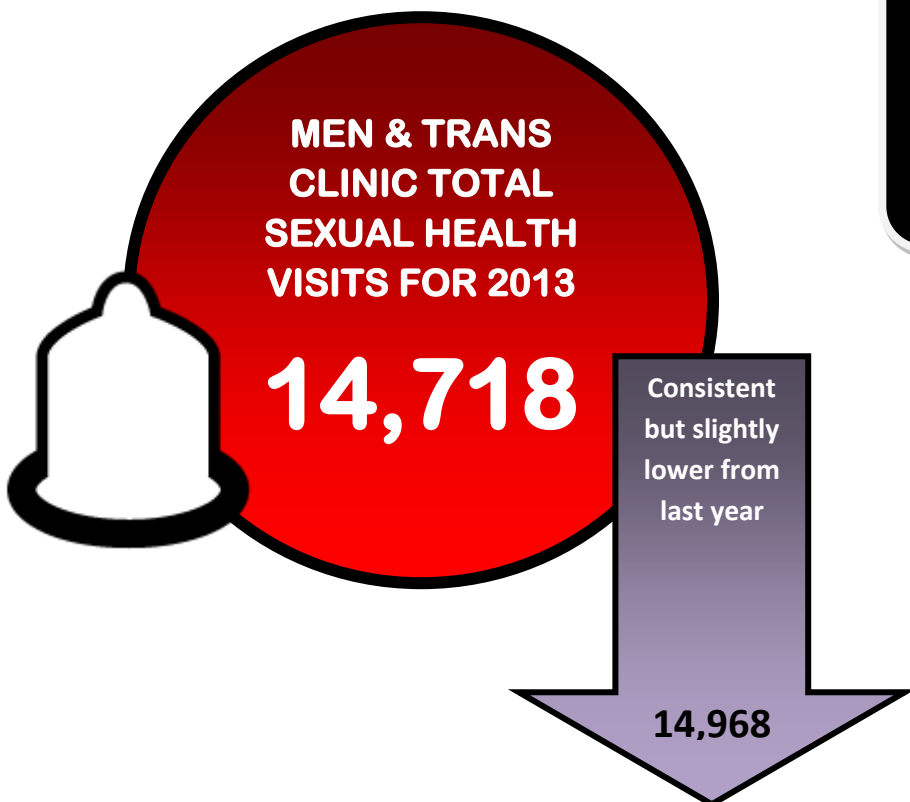
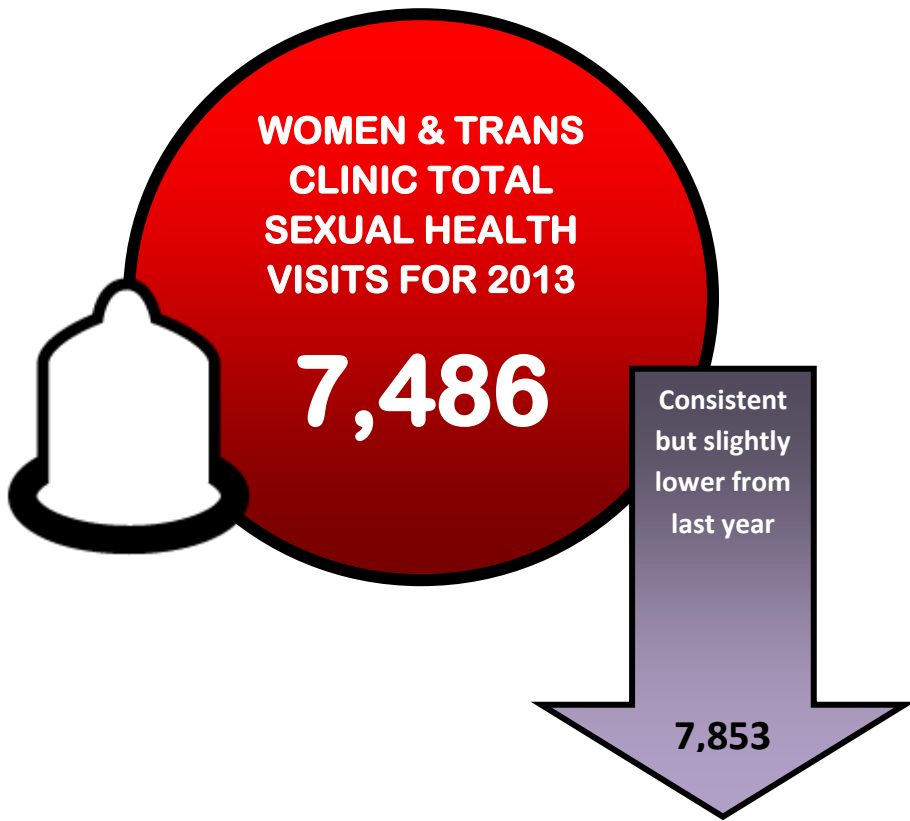
Reasons for sexual health visits to the Women/Trans clinic include contraception, pregnancy testing, abortion referrals, sexual assault and other miscellaneous gynecological concerns. There were fewer pap smear tests this year as a consequence of new Ontario Cervical Screening Guidelines. These guidelines raised the age of first pap to 21, and changed the normal screening interval from 1 to 3 years.

The total number of sexual health visits to the Men/Trans Clinic has also remained relatively consistent. Almost all non-HIV visits to the Men/Trans Clinic are for STIs and/or STI related concerns.

TOTAL NUMBER OF SEXUAL HEALTH & HIV

IN-CLINIC VISITS FOR 2013:

27,252



**TOTAL SEXUAL HEALTH
VISITS (NOT INCLUDING
HIV) FOR 2013**

22,204

Bath Stats for 2013

- Total number of HIV tests done: 324
- Total number of HIV Positive results: 2
- Total number of STI done (Syphilis/ Hepatitis) tests: 96
- Total number of clients seen during bathhouse outreach: 882

Peter Bochove Bathhouse Outreach Program

Since 1975, the clinic has provided anonymous STI testing and information at local baths. The service began as a routine STI testing clinic, with an HIV counselling component added in 1983, anonymous testing in 1995 and rapid POC testing in 2010. Clinics usually run for 3-hour sessions in four Toronto bathhouses. We provide free condoms and lube, and testing for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis. Bath management has always cooperated, offering space for testing, regular announcements and display areas for educational materials.

The program is aimed at all bathhouse patrons, but in particular at men who otherwise might not attend a clinic or their doctor for STI and HIV concerns. While many patrons are self-identified gay men who have no difficulty accessing services, others fall into a variety of hard-to-reach communities. Bathhouses have always attracted closeted bisexual and married men who have sex with men (MSM). These individuals require the anonymity of this setting, as they are unwilling to access sexual health services in their communities. The clinic has been actively cooperating with other agencies offering community-specific outreach services. The bath program offers an ideal opportunity for staff to provide information and testing to specialized groups within the MSM community. It is noteworthy that the number of HIV tests has more than doubled since we began offering rapid POC HIV testing at the baths. This year, 2 individuals tested HIV positive in the bath program.

The clinic regularly collaborates with the M2M network partners for several regular special-event Bathhouse testing nights. In particular, we partnered with Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS), Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP) and Centre for Spanish Speaking People (CSSP).

After testing at The Oak Leaf for several years with not much success, we decided to have an extensive three month stint to see if a different approach to increase testing would be beneficial. We had an experienced counsellor try out different methods to outreach at the venue. He came up with the following results:

- A good proportion of the guys going to Oak Leaf are street involved and going to rest, bathe, or get a break from the outdoors. From conversations I overhear there's definitely substance use going on (pot, crack, not sure about injection drug use). There's definitely a need for services around housing, general health care and other sorts of support but I don't get the sense that HIV (or syphilis or Hep C) are at the forefront of the services they probably need.
- Obviously there are some men who are most likely there to hook up, and I think that at least one or two younger guys are hanging around possibly doing sex work. Usually once or twice a shift someone will poke their head into the room but it's more out of curiosity.
- The Grindr and Scruff profiles that were made were not effective at getting guys to come in. It appears a good number of the guys using those services might not even know about the Oak Leaf and perhaps they're not comfortable going in even if they do know.

Given that there were very few people testing at the Oak Leaf, we decided that the funds for Oak Leaf shifts would be better spent at another bathhouse.

Health Promotion & Nursing Clinic Program

The Health Promotion/Nursing Clinic for HIV Positive women and trans women remained popular in 2013. The one-time funding from the 'Circle of Care' consortium morphed into permanent annualized funding from the AIDS Bureau to offset much of the program costs.

Attendance averaged 22 women and trans women per group, covering topics such as disclosure, domestic violence, sexual health, financial management etc. The education and support opportunities have empowered some women to venture out and register for school or look for work. The group has also allowed participants to build peer connections where they can provide support for each other when needed. In addition, at each group, the Poz women avail themselves of the opportunity for one-on-one nursing consultations.



Our HIV positive support worker continues to provide emotional and practical support individually as well. This includes accompaniment to appointments, hospital visits, delivering medication and home visits where support has been needed around relationships, children, family deaths, etc.

This program would not be possible without the continuing support from Toronto People with HIV/AIDS Foundation (PWA). This year, in response to the popularity of the HP/Nursing Clinic, PWA changed their programming schedule to allow the group to occupy a much roomier and more appropriate space. Their 'Circle of Care' coordinator was also very involved with the clinics and of great support to the Program Manager. In addition our thanks go to Casey House for the provision of childcare funds and nursing staff and to PASAN for staff support.

Total Attendance at
Health Promotion
& Nursing Clinic:

478



Individual
nursing
consultations:

96

Links Statistics

- 26% of Links clients reported mental health issues such as anxiety and depression
- 26% of Links clients reported difficulties entering or maintaining a relationship
- Nearly a third, 32% reported alcohol and/or drug use

Making the Links Program

Making the Links is a free and confidential short-term counselling and community referral program for men who have sex with men (MSM) who engage in high risk sexual behaviour. The goal of this program is to help equip clients with insight, tools and resources to address some of the barriers that they experience in employing risk reduction strategies. A comprehensive psychosocial assessment is conducted to determine suitability for the short-term counselling program and/or community referrals. Given that almost all Links' clients discuss barebacking, HIV/AIDS and risk reduction, the issues that were most notably associated with high-risk sexual behaviour include: anxiety/depression, social isolation/loneliness, substance use, relationship issues, family issues, abuse, grief/loss and coming out or unresolved sexual identity issues.

Almost all clients seen by the program were given a community referral, doctor referral and/or hard-copy resources to walk away with. Some clients preferred to just talk and refused further referrals; nor were further referrals appropriate in each instance depending on individual motivations to make a behavioural change. Community programs and support groups were most often framed as mediums for breaking poor behaviour patterns, increasing social opportunities in safe spaces and being able to talk about things that matter to them in a non-bar or substance-using environments.

Another element to Making the Links is the Transition into HIV Care Program. Every client who tests positive for HIV in our clinic has the opportunity to receive regular follow-up from a counsellor. Through the completion of a bio-psycho-social assessment, the counsellor is able to determine gaps in needs and connect the client to a primary HIV care doctor and/or other community supports. Clients in this program are also able to access short-term counselling to deal with the impact of the recent diagnosis.

While the majority of the program's clients benefited from a single counselling session, 34% of clients received upwards of 8 sessions to receive psycho-educational support, and develop/strengthen coping/risk reduction strategies. Almost every client was also given a referral to a community program or a hard copy of a resource to walk away with. The most common referrals were to AIDS Service Organizations, Rainbow Services at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), and David Kelley Services – Family Services Toronto.

- Total number of Links clients seen in 2013:
92
- Total number of clinical encounters:
147

Interested in volunteering ?

- Volunteer duties are mostly administrative such as filing, booking appointments and other tasks as needed
- Prospective volunteers are interviewed, must sign a confidentiality agreement form and go through an orientation and training process provided by staff and other volunteers
- On-going training and support is provided
- Please note that volunteer applicants will be contacted on an as needed basis

APPLY IN PERSON

- Volunteer application forms are available at the front desk

APPLY ONLINE

- Volunteer application forms are also available online at: www.hasslefreeclinic.org/VolunteerForm.php

Volunteer Program

Hassle Free is extremely thankful to have a very committed team of volunteers. There were over 60 active volunteers in 2013, contributing well over 5,000 hours of service. They form an integral part of our perpetually busy clinic. From greeting people at the reception counter to booking appointments, they are in many ways the face of Hassle Free – the first voice and face with whom clients come in contact. This can be very challenging, as clients often are in crisis when they call or attend the clinic. We rely on volunteers to also assist with research, collating data, and the day-to-day maintenance of the clinic.

Each year, the clinic undertakes volunteer training. Front desk volunteers are trained to do appropriate screening when booking appointments. Even though this can involve complicated assessments of a variety of situations, it is working extremely well. Our volunteers have a strong knowledge base, but ensure staff are consulted when appropriate. This year volunteers from both clinics were involved in an extensive training initiative on trans inclusivity.



Hassle Free also works with a very solid and committed group of “behind the scenes” volunteers. Our nine-member, community-based Board of Directors continues to lend a wealth of expertise, skill and guidance to our overall operations. The staff is particularly grateful for the Board’s unwavering support.

Many of our volunteers take initiative and go above and beyond the call of duty with regard to hours, added duties and responding to last minute requests. Our volunteers take great pride in their work and many have been extremely loyal for years.

We are especially appreciative to several of our volunteers who have provided their unwavering support and several consecutive years of loyal service. Special thanks to: Loudes Alexander, Ronald Benedetti, Erin Fauteux, Ed Follet, Sean Gamble, Richard Gilmour, Wolfgang Hock, Lysanne Menezes, Miran Kim, Warren Ross, Fiona Sillars, Harvey St. Amant and Stephan Westfall.



THANK YOU!

A DECADE OF VOLUNTEERING EXCELLENCE!

We are in complete gratitude and greatly commend the following individuals for their outstanding service and commitment to Hassle Free Clinic. Their loyalty and dedication continue to go above and beyond the call of duty.

ROBERT BOOTH – 11 YEARS

WOLFGANG HOCK – 11 YEARS

WARREN ROSS – 11 YEARS

HARVEY ST. AMANT – 12 YEARS

Conferences and Professional Education

- AIDS and Sexual Health Info Line – Herpes Counselling
- AIDS Bureau – Annual HIV testing conference
- AIDS Bureau – POC testing in Kingston
- AIDS Committee of Toronto – Volunteer training
- Algoma Health Unit – POC Testing
- Asian Community AIDS Services – Sex, Love & Asian Men! Event
- Asian Community AIDS Services – Site visit
- Black CAP – POC testing
- CATIE – Deliberative Dialogue on Treatment and Prevention
- Couples HIV Counselling & Testing (CHCT) – training
- Hep C Conference – POC presentation
- HFC Positive Women’s Group – STIs
- HFC Volunteers – HIV Anxiety training
- HFC Volunteers – Reproductive Justice
- HFC Volunteers – Trans Inclusivity training
- Polyamory Toronto – HIV/STI presentation
- Ryerson School of Midwifery – Sexual Health, Abortion, HIV Testing
- Talk Shop – POC Training
- The 519 Among Friends LGBTQ Drop In – STIs and HIV
- Toronto Public Health HIV 101 Training – POC Testing
- University of Nipissing Faculty of Nursing – Site visit

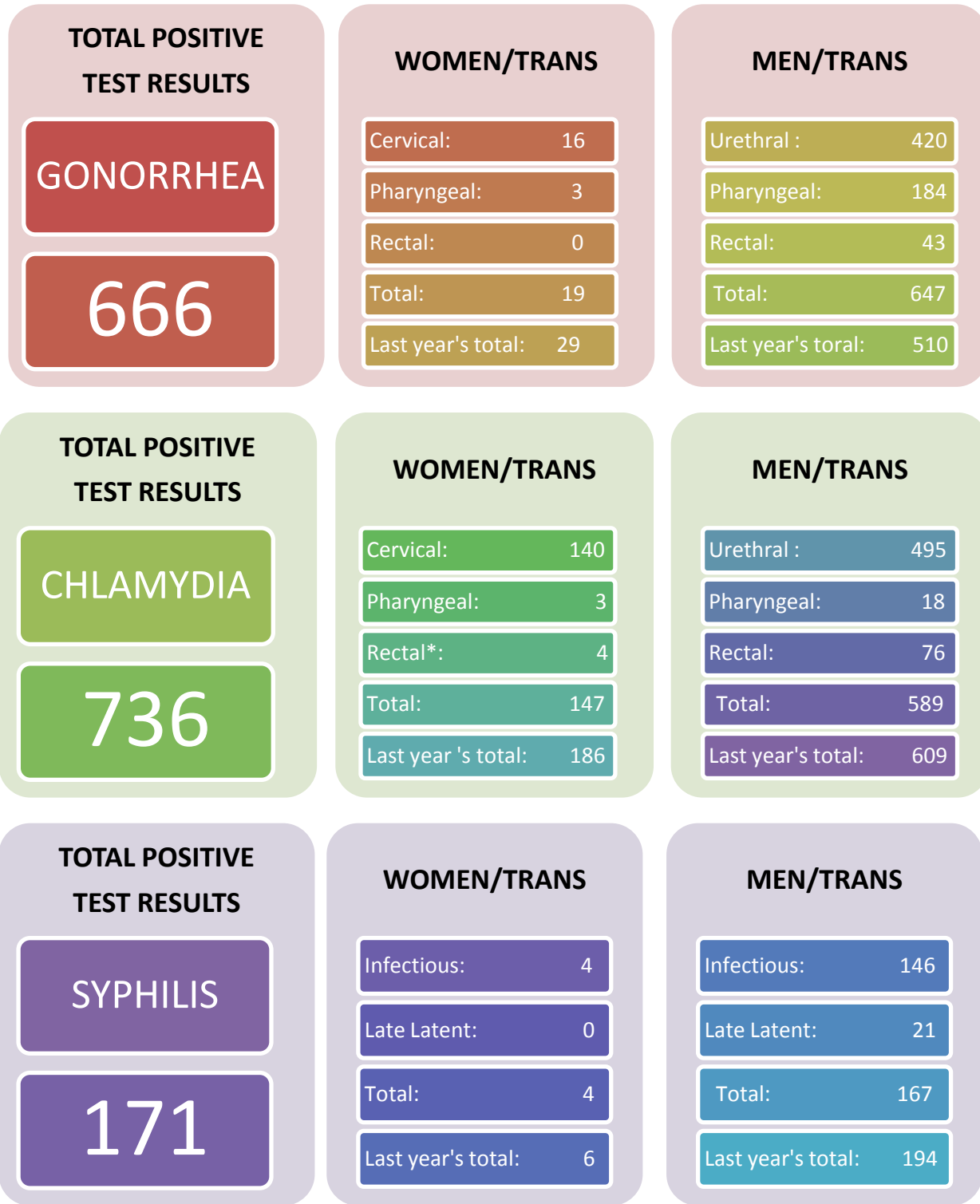
Networks and Working Groups

- AIDS Bureau HIV Test Requisition Working Group
- Clinic Sharing Network
- Enhanced Testing Working Group
- Gay Men's Sexual Health (GMSH) Network
- HIV Patient Instructor Steering Committee – U of T Medical Students
- M2M Network
- Making the Links – HIV follow-up and care
- MG Study – Working Group
- Mycoplasma genitalium Study Advisory Committee
- OHTN substance use round-table
- Point of Care Testing National Working Group
- PrEP Study Working Group
- PWA – Test Feasibility Group
- Reinvigorating HIV Prevention in Gay Men and MSM Working Group
- Sexual Health Network
- Syphilis/HIV Modeling Working Group
- Urine HIV Biomarker Study Working Group

Media Interviews and Articles

- CTV News
- National Post
- Global Television
- Xtra Magazine
- Medical Post

POSITIVE TESTS RESULTS



* All Rectal Chlamydia is processed for LGV

POSITIVE TESTS RESULTS

