

# spanc

Study of the Prevention of Anal Cancer

## ISSUE 12 - APRIL 2017

Welcome to the April issue of the SPANC newsletter. 2017 is well underway and there are lots of things happening this year that may interest you as a SPANC participant.

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- Addition of 10% lignocaine spray
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### Dr Carmella Law describes how SPANC managed to get the new Dream Couch

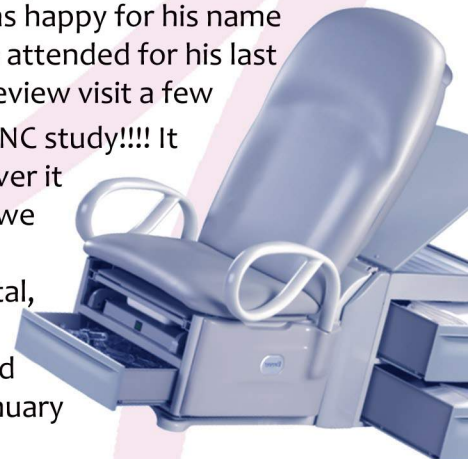


Dr Carmella Law thanks Michael Green for his very generous donation

In 2014, as part of our learning process to improve the quality assurance of SPANC procedures, I visited several different centres of excellence which were well established in performing high resolution anoscopies (HRAs), starting with Prof Joel Palefsky's team at the University of California in San Francisco (UCSF), as well as Homerton Hospital in London and Australian centres such as Dr Jenny McCloskey's clinic within the Sexual Health clinic in Perth, and Dr Richard Turner's clinics in Tasmania. One item which caught my attention immediately was the fact that they all had special examination couches, not the standard hospital bed which we were using in an improvised fashion at that time.

I happened to express my "couch envy" to one of our SPANC participants, Michael Green (who was happy for his name and photo to be published) when he attended for his last HRA visit that year, and by his final review visit a few

months later, he told me he had decided to donate one such couch to the SPANC study!!!! It was totally unexpected and his generosity completely bowled me over. However it took over two years to realise that dream. Let me explain . . . Michael thought we were rather shy in receiving the donation, but the reality was that there was nowhere to place the couch within the IBAC department at St Vincent's Hospital, which at that time was undergoing organisational changes. Eventually in late 2016 we were told there will be two procedure rooms and the new couch could go into one of them. That was the moment we were waiting for! On the 24 January 2017 the dream couch had a home and was installed in the procedure room.



## What difference does the Dream Couch make to the participant and the clinical team?

Firstly, the participant doesn't have to undress, or follow complex instructions on how to position themselves (as they did previously), so it saves on the amount of time the participant has to be in the HRA room. The couch is ergonomically designed with your comfort and clinician's access in mind; handles on either side of the couch give something for the participant to hang on to when getting on and off the couch.

Secondly, the couch height is electronically adjustable up and down, which the previous standard hospital bed was not, so it makes it much easier for participants to initially position themselves on the seat, and we do the rest in terms of raising and lowering for the best possible view.

During the anoscopy procedure, it is really easy to gently manoeuvre the participant on the couch to maximize the best possible view of the anal canal. This is greatly assisted by the new High Definition curved monitor, which also makes it easier for the participant to view the procedure should he wish to.

Another superb feature is the clinician's ability to view certain 'hidden' corners that are otherwise often difficult to see, simply by asking the participant to gently roll over and place their feet on the other stirrup. This is rarely done but took much longer in the old setup, as he would have to physically get up and be repositioned. This feature reduces the possibility of missing those hidden areas that have escaped microscopic examination, thus improving our viewing accuracy significantly.

## Some feedback on the new Dream Couch

Right from the beginning the clinical team asked participants how they felt on the new examination couch and what they thought of the modification to the procedure (not having to get undressed and even keeping shoes on). Most of the participants like the look of it and were amazed at how roomy it was. We could easily fit everyone on the couch comfortably.



Participant  
Feedback

They felt comfortable lying on it with their feet resting on the stirrups as opposed to us trying to fit their knees in front of the padded metal bar, often with their lower leg dangling. Some admitted that with the previous setup, they often felt a bit insecure. They either felt like they would fall off the bed or that their legs could not stay in position!

They were pleased with not having to spend the time getting undressed and with the positioning being simplified.

Overall the Dream Couch is a great success and a huge boon to our clinical research efforts, and we all owe a heartfelt debt of gratitude to Michael for his quite overwhelming generosity.  
Thank you Michael!



## Addition of 10% lignocaine spray

\*On 1 March 2017 we received approval for the use of the 10% lignocaine spray in reducing pain associated with taking biopsies during the HRA. This is a local anaesthetic spray, often used by anaesthetists during surgery who spray the back of a patient's throat before inserting a tube to assist breathing during operations. It's also used in obstetrics, sprayed on the skin around the birth canal to assist with child birth, so it's a very effective local anaesthetic. In October 2016, after Dr Carmella Law observed the Dutch team in the Academisch Medisch Centrum in Amsterdam using this spray, we applied for approval to use it in SPANC.



This preparation will replace the 5% lignocaine ointment and the injection of local anaesthetic used previously. After a few test sessions, we were able to work out the best timing for spraying the lignocaine to allow optimum effectiveness for the local anaesthesia to begin. Feedback from participants so far has been very positive.

## SPACE: Study of Pomalidomide in Anal Cancer Precursors

A new study has started at St Vincent's Hospital in collaboration with the Kirby Institute. Its aim is to assess whether using the medication Pomalidomide to stimulate the immune response is effective as treatment of HSIL (high grade lesions in the anal canal). The ultimate goal is to prevent the development of anal cancer in those at the highest risk. Pomalidomide has been shown to be effective and safe in treating other tumours caused by viruses, and this is the first time it is being studied in HSIL.

Pomalidomide is taken orally in capsule form for 3 weeks out of every 4 along with aspirin or a similar medication to prevent blood clots, one of the possible side effects. Study treatment can continue for up to six months, with high resolution anoscopy (HRA) at the start and at completion of treatment (6 months) to assess whether the HSIL has resolved. There is another HRA scheduled at 12 months so in all, there are 3 HRAs in the study.

### Key entry criteria:

- Open to people who have completed SPANC and have persistent HSIL, as well as people diagnosed with HSIL outside of SPANC
- Persistent HSIL for at least 12 months
- Both HIV positive and negative individuals are eligible
- If HIV positive, must be on ART with suppressed HIV viral load and CD4 over 200
- No history of blood clots or serious heart problems

The **SPACE** study is being led by Dr Mark Polizzotto of the Kirby Institute and St Vincent's Hospital, in collaboration with clinicians and investigators at both institutions.

If you'd like more information about SPACE, please contact:

- **David Ninham**, Clinical Project Coordinator on 02 8382 4976 or email [david.ninham@svha.org.au](mailto:david.ninham@svha.org.au)
- **Dr Carmella Law**, who will be the anoscopist performing all HRAs on 02 8382 3106

## SPANC Information Night #2 - Tuesday 24 October '17

Those of you who were lucky enough to attend the last SPANC Information Night back in March 2015 will recall it as a Celebrity-Studded 'B' List Event (see our Newsletter report on that evening here). It was our way of saying 'Thank You' to all our participants, while giving you up-to-date study results during a relaxed and informal evening.

Now, as we move toward the end of the study in July 2018, we'd like to do it again! So this year you're invited to SPANC's 'Night of Nights' - just like the Logies but with an interesting medical theme. There'll be speakers, our latest study results and up-to-date research information about anal health. Supper will be provided - and hopefully there'll be some surprises too. And best of all - it's free!

The Information Night will be on Tuesday October 24th, from 6-9pm, in the Science Theatre at the UNSW campus at Kensington, easily reached by buses from Darlinghurst, Alexandria, Newtown and Bondi Junction. There will be free parking available on campus for the evening. It will most likely be the last Information Night before the Study finishes next year.

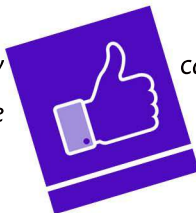
We'd like to get an idea of attendance numbers for catering purposes, so if you think you'd like to come, please email Pat at [pmcgrath@kirby.unsw.edu.au](mailto:pmcgrath@kirby.unsw.edu.au), and in the subject line just say 'yes' or 'no', and if yes, how many will be coming (e.g. 'yes 1' or 'yes 2' etc). We'll send out further details and helpful information as we get closer to the day, including bus routes and numbers, and maps for parking.

If you're concerned about your privacy or confidentiality at this event, please be assured that the only people attending will be SPANC participants (perhaps with a partner/friend), frontline SPANC staff that you've met during your SPANC visits or talked to on the phone, and SPANC Study team researchers and collaborators.

### Your Comments!

In our previous newsletters our SPANC doctors have answered questions you've raised in your surveys. In this issue we'd like to present some of your feedback that you've provided from those surveys.

- *I find the screening informative, responsible and about as pleasant as an awkward and embarrassing procedure could possibly be made to be. The humour helps a lot.*
- *I feel you guys are doing a great job. And all was ok with me. and I knew I was in good hands.*
- *I feel well informed about the screening otherwise I probably wouldn't undertake it. I think it would be difficult to improve the screening process purely due to the intrusive nature of the exam, hence some discomfort is always likely*
- *I think everyone does as much as they can to make us comfortable*
- *I will be happy to see the doctor in the new year. The team is great. The tests are what they are to get the results needed*
- *Administer gas for the procedure 😊*



Thank you for supporting SPANC

SPANC is funded through the Australian Government's chief medical research agency, the National Health and Medical Research Council and Cancer Council NSW. Over the life of SPANC more than \$3 million will be invested in anal cancer prevention.

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[spanc.org.au](http://spanc.org.au)

Contact us at: [spanc.org.au](http://spanc.org.au)  
1800-4-SPANC (1800 4 77262)  
[spanc@kirby.unsw.edu.au](mailto:spanc@kirby.unsw.edu.au)