

Overview of Queen's Park Counselling Centre and Clinic - QPCC&C

The Queen's Park Counselling Centre and Clinic (QPCC&C), since its inception in 1944, was mandated to be the specialist centre for the management of clients who presented with any of the various Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Protocols and guidelines were established, personnel trained and medical requirements obtained to provide this important and essential service.

El Queen's Park Counselling Centre and Clinic (QPCC&C), desde sus comienzos en 1944 fue dirigido para ser el centro especializado para el manejo de los pacientes que presentan alguna de las varias infecciones de transmisión sexual. Los protocolos y las directivas fueron creadas así como el personal entrenando y los requerimientos médicos obtenidos para proporcionar este importante servicio.

The vision of QPCC&C is "A caring, private and confidential healthcare environment for all clients" and its mission is "To provide quality healthcare to clients with Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS, their contacts and others concerned, in an affordable, sustained and equitable manner, and in so doing control the incidence of these diseases in Trinidad and Tobago". Its goal therefore, must be "To contribute significantly in reducing the incidence and prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV Infections and AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago."

The protocols and guidelines instituted enable staff to educate persons on preventative strategies, while obtaining relevant information – social, sexual and cultural beliefs, to be better able to respond to the specific needs of the clientele. As such, QPCC&C's two main clinics are located in Port of Spain and San Fernando, with nine (9) related Field Clinics throughout the country for ease of accessibility.

Unprotected sexual activity can lead to contracting an STI including HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the constant availability of free condoms at clinic locations is a step in the right direction by Trinidad and Tobago to reduce the spread of STI's. Other prevention methods include contact tracing partner tests and integrated screening practices, which are also available at QPCC&C.

Common STIs managed by QPCC&C

Following is a brief outline of the more common STIs managed at QPCC&C.

A. Syphilis/Sifilis

Syphilis is caused by the bacteria *Treponema Pallidum*. It goes through four (4) stages. These are:

Stage 1: 0-3 months – During this stage a painless sore forms on the genital, rectum, mouth or throat depending on the point of entry of the bacteria. The sore disappears on its own in 3-6 months, even without medical intervention. However, the disease process continues if not treated.

Stage 2: 3-6 months – During this period flu like symptoms are experienced along with fever, pain and patchy hair loss may occur. A characteristic rash may occur in the palms and soles of the feet.

Stage 3: 6-12 months – Symptoms may disappear, but the bacteria continue to multiply in the body.

Stage 4: 12 months and over – Serious injury may occur in the body resulting in blindness, arthritis and damage to the heart and brain.

QPCC&C is the Government's treatment centre for Syphilis in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to the physical examination, a VDRL (Venereal Diagnostic Research Laboratory) blood test is done along with a confirmatory test called TP-PA (Treponema Pallidum Particle Agglutination). This test will determine whether a client needs treatment or not. Clients are treated with specific antibiotics and monitored for two (2) years after being treated to assure complete treatment and no re-infection.

B. Gonorrhoea/ *Gonorrhoea*

This is caused by the Neisseria Gonococcus bacteria. The common signs are a white or yellow discharge from the penis or vaginal, burning on passing urine or dysuria, abdominal pain, and swollen glands in pubic or groin areas. However, most females have no symptoms.

Gonorrhoea causes sterility (inability to have children) in both male and female, blockage of the fallopian tubes in females which leads to ectopic pregnancy and possible death, arthritis or infection of the joints and blindness in babies.

The diagnostic tool for Gonorrhoea is a pap smear and culture test and can be effectively treated with antibiotics.

C. Chlamydia/ *Chlamydia*

This infection is caused by another bacterium called Chlamydia Trachomatis. It is a very common STI with similar symptoms to Gonorrhoea such as penile or vaginal discharge and dysuria or burning when passing urine, though less severe. Many clients have no symptoms and if left untreated can cause sterility in both men and women.

It can be treated with antibiotics, however, like all STIs, after treatment persons can be re-infected by having unprotected sex with an infected person.

D. Genital Warts/ *Condiloma*

Genital Warts is one of the infections caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). This is a very common infection which infects a significant number of males and females. However, most HPV infections clear on its own without medical intervention.

There are an estimated 30-40 types or strains of HPV, of which Types 16 and 18 cause Cervical Cancer and Types 6 and 11 cause Genital Warts. Other cancers caused by the Human Papilloma Virus are Oral, Vulval, Anal and Penile Cancer. However, these conditions can be prevented by immunization with the HPV Vaccine which is available at QPCC&C and local health centres.

QPCC&C is also the Government's treatment centre for growths or Genital Warts that result from the HPV infection. However, once someone is infected with HPV, there is no cure. This means that the Warts can be treated or removed but there is a possibility that they may re-occur and therefore the person has to be re-treated as often as necessary.

E. Genital herpes/Herpes Genital

Herpes is another viral infection that is spread by sexual contact or physical contact with the blisters of an infected person. The symptoms include an itchy, burning rash or sore which usually disappears in about 2 to 3 weeks, but can re-appear in the same spot in the future, especially during stress.

Herpes, like HPV, has no cure. Treatment is offered to reduce the extent of the symptoms and control the re-appearance of the sore.

F. HIV/VIH

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This is the virus that cause AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). The virus is found in the bodily fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk of infected persons.

Sexual intercourse without the protection of a condom with an HIV positive person results in the exchange of bodily fluids which can cause the virus to spread to the uninfected person. Young adults 20-39 years attending the clinic appear to be most affected, according to our 2014 data.

QPCC&C offers free same day Rapid HIV testing at most of its clinics, for clients to find out their status. Persons whose result is positive are then referred to the relevant clinic for further testing, consultations, counselling and treatment where necessary.

General Prevention Strategies/Estrategias Generales de Prevención

In order to reduce the risk of contracting an STI, the following should be observed:

Para reducir el riesgo de contraer una enfermedad de transmisión sexual, observando lo siguiente:

- ⚡ Abstinence from sex/**Abstinencia sexual**
- ⚡ Limit sexual activity to one faithful partner/**Limitar la actividad sexual a una pareja fiel**
- ⚡ Use protection during sex with a male or female partner/**Uso de proteccion durante la actividad sexual con la pareja hombre o mujer**
- ⚡ Know your status and that of your sex partner, get tested and screened for STIs/**Conocer tu estado y el tu pareja, obtener pruebas y studios para las enfermedades de transmision sexual (ETS)**

- 🦋 Educate yourself on STIs/**Educar y obtener información sobre las enfermedades de transmisión sexual (ETS)**

Clinic Locations and Schedules

Following is a list of QPCC&C clinics, their locations and their schedules:

MAIN CLINICS

Port of Spain: COSTATT Building, Port of Spain General Hospital, Monday to Friday 7.00 am - 3.00 pm
Tel: 625-3944, 625-2556

San Fernando: Ward 17 San Fernando General Hospital, Monday to Friday 8.00 am - 3.00 pm, Tel: 652-8371

FIELD CLINICS AT HEALTH CENTRES/FACILITIES

DAYS	LOCATION	TIMES
MONDAY	<u>RIO CLARO</u> HEALTH INSPECTORATE BUILDING	9.30 AM – 12 PM
TUESDAY	<u>CHAGUANAS</u> ANKAVILLA BUILDING	12 PM – 3 PM
	<u>POINT FORTIN</u> HEALTH CENTRE	9.30 AM – 12 PM
WEDNESDAY	<u>ARIMA</u> HEALTH FACILITY, LIFESTYLE CLINIC	9 AM – 12 PM
	<u>PRINCES TOWN</u> HEALTH FACILITY	12 PM – 3 PM
THURSDAY	<u>SIPARIA</u> HEALTH FACILITY 1 st AND 3 rd THURSDAY ONLY	9 AM – 12 PM
FRIDAY	<u>SANGRE GRANDE</u> HEALTH CENTRE	9 AM – 12 PM
	<u>COUVA</u> HEALTH FACILITY	9 AM – 12 PM

*Confidential, Convenient, Caring/ **Confidencial, conveniente, cuidados***

*Come and visit us! / **Ven y Visítanos***

From the Staff of QPCC&C