Key Findings
- 106 attendances by men aged 50 and over in a 3 month period (6% of attendances),
- 30% were MSMs,
- 27% were married,
- 46% never used condoms,
- 28% of attendances lead to an STI diagnosis.

Background
Clinicians are often reluctant to initiate discussions about sexual health with older patients and may not consider STIs in the differential diagnosis of a presentation [1]. However, many individuals remain sexually active well into their 70s and 80s and evidence suggests that older individuals are not embarrassed about being asked about sex [2]. Even sexual health professionals may assume that older patients present with non-STI-related symptoms such as skin conditions and sexual dysfunction.

There is sparse data on the sexual health and STI risk of older men, however, David et al. found that 24% of patients aged 60 and older had an STI [3]. Tobin & Harindra found that 8% of attendees at a Portsmouth GUM clinic were aged 50 and over; the most common diagnoses were balanitis and NSU [4]. The HPA report in 2011 showed that the percentage of STIs in the older age groups in the UK is increasing and data from the USA show STI rates were up by almost 50 percent for men over 40 between 1996 and 2008 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

Aims
To review men aged 50 and over presenting to a GUM outpatient clinic in the first 3 months of 2012.

Methods
The records of men aged 50 and over attending the GUM clinic in the first 3 months of 2012 were reviewed.

Results
In the three month time period there were 1850 attendances by men of all ages and 106 attendances by men aged 50 and over (6%). The notes for 103 episodes (102 patients) were available for examination. The ages ranged from 50 to 90 years (mean 58; SD 7.2) and 31 (30%) were MSMs.

Graph 1: Presenting Complaint

For 22 of the 103 episodes (21%) the patient had seen another healthcare professional about their problem before attending GUM. The number of partners in the preceding 3 months ranged from 0 to 7 (mean 1.4; SD 1.3). A significantly higher proportion of MSM-episodes (17 of 31; 55%) reported >1 partner in the preceding 3 months compared to heterosexual episodes (17 of 72; 24%; p value 0.004).

28 patients (27%) were recorded as being married: 7 of 31 (23%) MSMs and 21 of 71 (30%) heterosexuals (not statistically significant; NS).

20 of 31 (65%) MSMs had had a previous STI compared to 32 of 71 (45%) heterosexuals (NS).

47 (46%) patients never used condoms and 9 of these (9%) had had more than one partner in the preceding 3 months. Only 4 (4%) of the patients were recorded as always using condoms.

For 15 episodes (15%) there was no HIV test performed and the patient had never had a previous HIV test. For 4 episodes (4%) there was no HIV test performed and the patient had had more than 1 partner in the preceding 3 months.

29 episodes (28%) lead to the diagnosis of an STI. 23 of the 72 heterosexuals (32%) were diagnosed with an STI compared to 6 of the 31 MSMs (19%) (NS).

Graph 2: Diagnoses

23 of the 72 heterosexuals (32%) were diagnosed with an STI compared to 6 of the 31 MSMs (19%) (NS). The STIs included: NSU/proctitis, epididymoorchitis, warts, molluscum contagiosum, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, herpes, syphilis, scabies, pubic lice, HIV, hepatitis B.

Table 1: High Risk Behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total (N (%))</th>
<th>MSM (N (%))</th>
<th>Non-MSM (N (%))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saunas</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSW</td>
<td>12 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinging</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (17%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Internet’: recorded as having ever met a partner on the internet; ‘CSW’: commercial sex worker.

Conclusion
- A substantial number of men aged 50 and over presented to the clinic in a 3 month period,
- The majority of these patients presented with symptoms that would indicate a possible STI and almost a third of the episodes lead to an STI diagnosis,
- 27% of the patients (23% of MSMs) were recorded as being married and these individuals would be unlikely to be identified as being at risk of STIs in non-sexual health settings,
- 33% of patients had had more than 1 partner in the preceding 3 months and consistent condom use was rare,
- Even in the GUM clinic we are missing opportunities: 15 patients left the clinic having never had an HIV test.

References

www.hiv-gum.org