

The Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance of Sexually Transmissible Infections and Blood Borne Viruses



What is ACCESS?

ACCESS is a federally-funded health surveillance and research project designed to monitor and inform Australia's efforts to control blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Started in 2008, the ACCESS network has grown to include over a hundred health services and laboratories in every state and territory. Data collected via ACCESS have been used to evaluate and inform health policy, assess public health interventions, and monitor population health.

ACCESS is a collaborative effort between the Burnet Institute, Kirby Institute and the National Serology Reference Laboratory. De-identified patient data are collated from a diverse collection sites that specialise in blood borne viruses and STIs including sexual health clinics, general practice clinics, hospitals, pathology laboratories, drug and alcohol services, and community health services.

How does ACCESS work?

ACCESS automatically and routinely extracts de-identified patient data from participating services using customised health extraction software called **GRHANITE™**. Developed at the University of Melbourne, the software employs industry-leading cryptography to ensure the secure extraction and transmission of all data. GRHANITE™ has been used to securely and anonymously extract data from hundreds of Australian health services.

Data extracted via ACCESS include pathology and treatment information on blood borne viruses and STIs. Relevant demographics, consultation information and behavioural details are also extracted from health services where they are available. Patients are only ever identified using an **irreversible signature code**, which means that no identifying details such as name or date of birth ever leave a participating service. Extracted data are stored in an encrypted format on a secure server at the Burnet Institute, only a small number of researchers have access to the database, and ACCESS only ever reports aggregate information to further ensure patient anonymity.

What does participation entail?

Participating ACCESS sites are required to install GRHANITE™ on a system within their service. Because the software is tailored to the individual database of a participating site, some upfront work is required to properly configure the extractions. Once the system has been established, however, ACCESS employs automated data extraction processes that require little ongoing effort from participating sites. Sites are encouraged to nominate a site investigator to be involved with data interpretation and article authorship. Site investigators are also welcome to propose analyses of the ACCESS database either specific to their service or across the whole network with analytical support available as needed.

Participating in ACCESS

If you are interested in ACCESS and would like more information, please contact the study coordinator Dr Denton Callander (d.callander@unsw.edu.au; 02 9385 9958) or visit the study website (www.accessproject.org.au).