

**HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOUR IN RELATION TO SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED  
INFECTIONS (STIs) IN NKOMAZI EAST AREA OF MPUMALANGA**

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Dr. Mecha Nwoke Eche, hereby declare that the work on which this research is based is original (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being or is to be submitted for another degree at this or any other university.

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**Signature**

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

To Almighty God with whom everything is possible!

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** The control of STIs remains a priority for the WHO. Health – seeking and sexual behaviors are important elements in the control of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

**Aim:** To assess health seeking behavior in relation to STIs amongst community members of Nkomazi East area of Mpumalanga who use Tonga hospital’s feeder clinics and comprehensive health centers.

**Study Design:** This was a quantitative research carried out as a non-experimental, descriptive cross-sectional survey employing the use of questionnaires for data collection. Questionnaires covering social, demographic, and healthcare-seeking and sexual behaviour information were administered to 332 patients attending primary care clinics in Nkomazi East area of Mpumalanga.

**Results:** Majority of the participants were single, literate, unemployed blacks aged between 16 – 23 years (43.7%). Participants displayed an exceptionally high STI knowledge with urethral discharge, painful micturition, vaginal discharge and lower abdominal pain the most recognised STI symptoms.

All the participants (100%) sought help on perceiving that they have an STI. Preferred source of help is the public health sector with traditional healers also finding some relevance. While compliance to treatment is largely satisfactory, ongoing unsafe sexual practices with active STI seem to be common place.

**Conclusion:** Participants displayed a high knowledge of STI symptoms and signs. Public health facilities were the preferred source of health. Health seeking seemed to be influenced by multiple factors. Financial consideration was not much of a factor while seeking help compared to accessibility to health facility and stigma or shame. Belief system, influence by family members, friends and partners were also important factors influencing health seeking behaviour

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