MIH student Astrid Stark - *Sexually transmitted infection transmission in Central Australia: Knowledge, condoms and socio-cultural issues affecting Aboriginal women*

There are alarmingly high rates of STIs in Central Australia and therefore a real potential for a HIV pandemic in the area. Efforts in screening, treatment and condom promotion have not lessened the escalating rates of STIs in Central Australia. It is surprising then, that there is little published qualitative research on STI transmission among Australian Aboriginal people. This research is of valuable importance to understanding the factors underlying these high rates of STIs among Central Australian Aboriginal people in an effort to possibly avert an HIV pandemic.

*A note about the Presenter*

Master of International Health student Astrid Stark is a registered nurse who completed her undergraduate nursing degree at Curtin University. She grew up in Perth, Australia with two backgrounds - Austrian and Chinese Malaysian - making her appreciate and celebrate cultural diversity at an early age. After she graduated as an RN, she worked at Fremantle Hospital before going overseas to volunteer for 3 months in Guyana, South America. This experience moved her to become passionate about international health and the HIV epidemic. After her world travels in 2001, she completed a Certificate in Sexual and Reproductive Health and then moved to Central Australia where she has worked with Aboriginal people for the past three and a half years. She has worked in three remote Aboriginal communities and remained working in one community as their women's health nurse for the past 20 months where she was privileged to undertake this research.