



STD EXAMINER

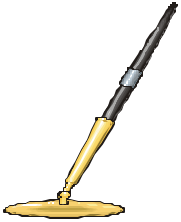
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August 2000

Volume 5, Number 3

Director's Column



IN MARCH, THE STD PROGRAM IDENTIFIED AN OUTBREAK OF SYPHILIS among men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgenders in Los Angeles County. Since that time, County Public Health has implemented an intensive response through extensive screening, treatment and case-finding activities, and a highly visible community awareness campaign. With the strong support of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors, and in collaboration with local community agencies, the Long Beach City Health Department, the California DHS STD Control Branch, and CDC, this response was designed to contain the immediate spread of the outbreak, and to address high risk sexual behaviors in the MSM and transgender populations clearly evident in the outbreak. Key elements included:

- 1) **Outreach screening** of 1,385 individuals at bathhouses, sex clubs, bars and other venues, and of 663 men at the County Jail facility. Through these efforts, 11 early syphilis cases and their known contacts were identified and treated.
- 2) **Preventive treatment** of 593 men in the L.A. County Jail.
- 3) **Increased public awareness** through an English and Spanish media campaign targeting higher-morbidity areas and populations. Billboards, bus benches, posters and wallet cards were distributed throughout these areas; ads were placed in newspapers, magazines, MSM-oriented websites, and radio; and education was provided through internet chat rooms. Two community agencies, AIDS Healthcare Foundation and the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, also placed posters and ads, which they developed specifically for MSM, in more than 70 venues and numerous publications. The outbreak was also publicized extensively through the regular news media.
- 4) **Targeted efforts to increase provider awareness** via "Dear Colleague" letters to HIV service providers and HIV Early Intervention Programs (EIPs).

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The Tale of the Charts Study Shows Changes in STD Clinic Usage

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS in DHS, such as the 1995 budget crisis and restructuring plan, and increased enrollment of patients into managed care plans has resulted in changing demographic patterns in STD clinic usage. Since 1995, the STD Program has implemented periodic cross-sectional chart reviews to assess the sociodemographic characteristics and STD diagnoses of patients who use L.A. County STD clinics.



Data were abstracted from a sample of STD clinic charts at the 13 DHS STD clinics during three time periods: 1995 (n=1,929), 1996 (n=1,054) and 1999 (n=1,232). Charts were analyzed from the first 25 patients seen by a clinician the first week for each of four consecutive months. Data were weighted to reflect variable population sizes at different clinics. The results showed:

Diagnosis. In 1999, bacterial vaginosis, chlamydia, and herpes were the most commonly diagnosed conditions. Chlamydia and herpes morbidity have increased the most in the STD clinics since 1995 (30.1% and 31.2%, respectively).

Gender. The ratio of men to women visiting the STD clinics in 1999 was 1.7:1. Since 1995, STD clinic utilization by males has increased 8%, while usage by females has decreased 12%.

Age. In 1999, 20-29 year olds comprised 41.8% of STD clinic visits. Since 1995, utilization by the 40 and older age group has increased by 29.8%, with syphilis as the primary diagnosis.

Ethnicity. The ethnic composition of the overall 1999 STD clinic population was 43% Hispanic, 37% Black, 14% White, 4% Asian, .4% Native American, 1.6% other/not indicated. Since 1995, STD clinic utilization has shown a 10-fold increase among 15-24 year old Whites, while usage by Hispanics and Blacks of that age has declined (9.1% and 19.2%, respectively).

These preliminary findings tell us that changing patterns of clinic usage do exist. The STD Program plans to conduct periodic chart reviews to determine long-term trends in client characteristics and clinic usage. This information will be used to determine staffing and patient needs, health education resources,

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Clinical Corner **Child Abuse Reporting**

According to *Sexually Transmitted Diseases 3rd Edition* child sexual abuse makes up 15 percent of all child maltreatment cases. In 1997, Los Angeles County's child abuse hotline reported 103,388 children as being victims of child abuse or neglect. Because child sexual abuse is usually a hidden act, surrounded by secrecy, criminality and shame, statistics underestimate this "hidden" pediatric problem. A number of serious and long-term neurological and psychological complications can result from child abuse and neglect.

County public health employees who work with a minor are mandated by California law to report child abuse and neglect. Failure to report by a mandated reporter not only can endanger a child's life, but is considered a crime.

Pediatric STD guidelines for reporting state that certain STDs indicate the likelihood of sexual abuse. The following lists all cases where reporting is mandatory:

- Gonorrhea or syphilis that is not perinatally acquired is a "certain" indicator of sexual abuse.
- Chlamydia and condylomata acuminata that are not perinatally acquired are "probable" indicators (cultures for chlamydia and gonorrhea are the only legally accepted tests at this time).
- *Trichomonas vaginalis* and herpes type 2 are "probable indicators".
- Herpes type 1 (genital) is a "possible indicator".
- Bacterial vaginosis is an "uncertain" indicator that requires medical follow-up before reporting.



- *Candida albicans* is an "unlikely" indicator. Providers are not required to report, but medical follow-up should be done.

In addition, mandated child abuse reporters, including doctors, nurses, and other health care providers, are by California law **required to report** the following types of sexual assault or abuse of minors:

- Any sexual contact between someone who is under age 14 and someone who is age 14 or older;
 - Any sexual contact between someone who is age 14 or 15, and someone who is 10 or more years older;
 - Intercourse between someone under age 16 and someone age 21 or older;
 - Any sexual contact between a minor and someone who is related to them, lives in their home, or has authority over them (such as a teacher or coach).

Mandated reporters must also make a report to the Child Abuse Hotline whenever they have a reasonable suspicion of physical or psychological abuse or neglect, including general medical neglect.

If you are unsure whether or not abuse or neglect are occurring, consult with your supervisor or call the Los Angeles County Child Abuse Hotline Number at 1-800-540-4000. Operators will assist you in determining whether or not the incident is reportable. If the report is taken, you must follow up the report by filling out the Suspected Child Abuse Report form and mailing it to Child Protective Services within 36 hours. Although mandated reporting is confidential, you must provide your name and affiliation. For further information, call the STD Program Nursing Division at (213) 744-3106.

Safer Sex Mariachis Serenade Local College Students

On May 9, 2000, the STD Program held an STD educational testing event for students of the East Los Angeles City College. This event showcased the lively music of the "Safer Sex Mariachis," who brought the important messages of STD/HIV testing and the dangers of unprotected sex. While health educators distributed condoms and encouraged students to get tested at the on-site mobile van, the Los Amigos Mariachi Band performed three original mariachi-style songs at the Monterey Park campus. "La Tragedia de Juan" ("Juan's Tragedy)," a ballad written by band leader Gabriel Zavala, describes the story of a young Mexican immigrant who leaves his family to find work in the U.S. After many months alone, he contracts HIV from a prostitute. When he returns to Mexico,



he unknowingly infects his wife and his unborn baby. Another song entitled "Hazte la Prueba" ("Take the Test") encourages HIV testing. "A Favor de la Vida" ("In Favor of Life") urges listeners to use condoms so that they can continue to take care of their families.

A total of 24 students were tested for STDs and HIV. Dr. Jonathan Fielding, Director of Public Health for the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, answered questions from the media covering the event, including CBS Channel 2, NBC Channel 4, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the college's student newspaper. The band was featured on the Channel 2 Program, "Hometown Heroes" that aired May 16, 2000.

As part of the health department's outreach to recent Latino immigrants, the four-member band also accompanies bilingual health educators from the STD Program's Community Outreach Services Unit to communities where Spanish-speaking day laborers congregate in search of work.



Reported Cases of STDs in Los Angeles County, First Quarter 2000. Provisional data.

Health District	CHLAMYDIA			GONORRHEA			SYPHILIS					
	2000	1999	%	2000	1999	%	EARLY SYPHILIS §			CONGENITAL		
	Cases	Cases	Change†	Cases	Cases	Change†	2000	1999	%	2000	1999	%
Alhambra	145	119	22	19	9	111	0	1	-100	0	0	0
Antelope Villy	117	143	-18	31	27	15	1	0	—	0	0	0
Bellflower	236	191	24	40	38	5	6	1	500	1	0	—
Central	331	275	20	71	75	-5	18	12	50	0	0	0
Compton	399	322	24	116	100	16	10	6	67	0	2	-100
East L.A.	193	160	21	18	12	50	2	1	100	1	0	—
East Valley	298	248	20	44	37	19	8	4	100	0	1	-100
El Monte	351	336	4	25	37	-32	5	2	150	1	0	—
Foothill	127	137	-7	15	10	50	2	1	100	0	0	0
Glendale	142	90	58	16	19	-16	1	1	0	0	0	0
Harbor	127	97	31	15	18	-17	0	1	-100	0	0	0
Hollywd-Wilsh	436	381	14	197	132	49	25	13	92	2	1	100
Inglewood	493	458	8	180	149	21	6	8	-25	0	1	-100
Northeast	290	240	21	29	28	4	6	1	500	0	0	0
Pomona	257	258	-0	32	28	14	4	2	100	0	1	-100
San Antonio	439	327	34	37	28	32	8	2	300	1	0	—
San Fernando	179	159	13	16	26	-38	2	1	100	0	0	0
South	343	302	14	120	96	25	9	7	29	0	1	-100
Southeast	276	244	13	64	45	42	8	10	-20	2	0	—
Southwest	652	565	15	236	191	24	10	15	-33	3	2	50
Torrance	184	172	7	35	36	-3	2	2	0	0	0	0
West	262	199	32	58	55	5	2	2	0	0	1	-100
West Valley	464	377	23	58	47	23	3	6	-50	0	1	-100
Whittier	218	181	20	16	24	-33	3	0	—	0	0	0
District Sum	6,959	5,981	16	1,488	1,267	17	141	99	42	11	11	0
DistrictUnk	640	1,003	-36	126	181	-30	2	5	-60	0	0	0
County Total	7,599	6,984	9	1,614	1,448	11	143	104	38	11	11	0

† Percent change in cases from First Quarter 1999 to First Quarter 2000.
 § Early Syphilis=Primary, Secondary, and Early Latent Syphilis.

§ Early

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5) **Research of factors influencing infection**, using intensive re-interviews of a sample of cases, to assist future case-finding and prevention activities.

6) **Condom distribution** at bathhouses, sex clubs, and other venues, and by community agencies at Gay Pride events and through other outreach activities.

7) **Collaboration** between local, state, and federal agencies, community organizations, and bathhouse and sex club owners and other local businesses to expand awareness, screening, and prevention, both for the specific outbreak populations and the general community. The collaboration between DHS and bathhouse and sex club owners in particular has created promising new opportunities for reducing STD/HIV risk among MSM.

Of the 102 total outbreak cases currently reported and confirmed as of August 2, 13 were primary, 34 secondary, and 55 early latent. Of these cases, six were among male-to-female transgenders, with the remainder among MSM (with one unknown); 77 were reported in L.A. County (excluding Long Beach), 15 in Long Beach, and 3 in Orange County. Hispanics accounted for 51 cases, African Americans for 11, Caucasians 38, and Asian/Pacific Islanders 2. HIV-positive individuals accounted for 54 of the cases, of whom 38 were receiving medical care. Cases ranged from 20 to 50 years old, with a median age of 36. Among the 77 L.A. County cases, 29 were identified by public providers (5 from STD clinics, 11 from jails, 5 from STD Program outreach efforts, and 8 from other public agencies).

After the interventions were initiated, the number of new cases dropped dramatically, and remained low until

recently. Outbreak cases (cases among MSM and transgender, reported since March 15) reached 51 by April 4, and climbed to 93 by May 26. Then, over the next two months, only three new outbreak cases were identified. However, four outbreak-related secondary cases were reported in the final week of July. These new cases underscore the need for ongoing intervention efforts and intensified provider and community awareness. To assess the impact of our efforts on the outbreak, the STD Program is reviewing hotline call logs and clinic visits, and will conduct surveys in targeted areas

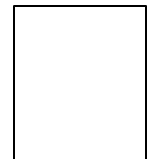
The STD Program will continue to work with other public and community agencies and local businesses to control syphilis in all affected populations. Our program is available to answer any questions regarding the outbreak and the response. All clinical providers should report newly identified syphilis cases to Michael Lawrence at 213-744-3376, or 213-458-5915 after 5 pm. General information about syphilis and other STDs can be obtained from the L.A. County STD Hotline, 1-800-758-0880, or at our web page, www.lapublichealth.org/std.

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and formulary allocations, and will help us to target appropriate resources based on needs. This work could never be done, however, without the significant time and participation of nursing and clinic staff. A sincere thank you to STD clinic staff who have helped with chart reviews and worked to complete the surveys. If you have questions about the clinic surveys, please contact Duli Kodagoda at 213-744-5926.

STD Examiner

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STD Examiner is published quarterly by the Los Angeles County Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Program. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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