

End-of-Year Director's Update

Division of STD Prevention
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

January 2, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Our nation continues to face record-high cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). With 2.4 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis reported in 2018, rising cases of congenital syphilis, and the growing threat of untreatable gonorrhea, stemming the rising tide of STDs will be challenging.

Here, in the Division of STD Prevention (DSTDP), we have been planning our next steps in the fight against STDs by focusing on our four strategy areas: 1) enhancing STD surveillance; 2) promoting cost-effective STD interventions such as outbreak investigations, testing and treatment, partner services, and linkage to care; 3) increasing uptake of CDC screening and treatment recommendations; and 4) strengthening the evidence for STD prevention and control. As we look forward to 2020, I'd like to share with you what we've been working on and accomplished this past year to tackle STDs.

Together, we've made significant advancements in our field in 2019, and I thank each of you for your continued collaboration. 2020 will be a big year for us, and I look forward to all the great work we will achieve!

Best Regards,



Gail Bolan, MD
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2019 Highlights

Coordinating Our Strategic Direction

This year, we are pleased to report progress on not one, but three critical STD/STI strategic documents:

- [STI Federal Action Plan](#) – The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health through the Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy, along with other federal partners, is developing the first ever federal plan for STI prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care. 2019 was a year of significant progress and we look forward to the anticipated release in 2020.
- In addition to the federal plan, the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), in conjunction with the National Coalition of STD Directors, and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) each are exploring which factors contribute to increasing STD rates and the approaches and resources needed to address increases. While the [NASEM report](#) is still in development, the NAPA report was released in two phases, the [first](#) in December 2018 with the [second](#) in November 2019. Together, these three strategic documents will provide a framework for us to turn the tide on increasing STDs with involvement from federal partners, policy makers, healthcare providers, state and local health departments, and community members.

2019 Highlights Continued

Scaling Up HIV Prevention Services in STD Specialty Clinics

Strengthening our nation's STD clinic infrastructure was a focus for our Division in 2019. With the rollout of the Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America (EHE) initiative, we had the opportunity to create three demonstration projects for specialty STD clinics in EHE Phase 1 jurisdictions. Through our Strengthening STD Prevention and Control for Health Departments Supplement, three jurisdictions—Baltimore City, Maryland, DeKalb County, Georgia, and East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana—were awarded funds for the project. STDs are associated with a higher risk of acquiring HIV infection and STD clinics play a vital role in identifying individuals who can benefit from HIV prevention services such as treatment as prevention, PrEP, and nPEP. We hope this project develops sustainable models for enhanced and scalable HIV and STD prevention services in STD specialty or sexual health clinics.

Leveraging State of the Art Science

Antibiotic-Resistant Gonorrhea Advancements

With the urgent threat of [antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea](#) and only one recommended antibiotic currently left for treatment, DSTDP has been hard at work with partners in the Division of Bacterial Diseases and NIH on biomedical advancements in gonorrhea diagnostics and therapeutics. Most recently, our Division in collaboration with our federal partners is examining the potential effectiveness of serogroup B meningococcal (MenB) vaccination against gonorrhea among adolescents and young adults using different epidemiologic and laboratory methodologies. Potential protective factors against gonorrhea with group B meningococcal outer membrane vesicle vaccines were first reported out of [New Zealand](#) in 2017.

STD Transmission Studies

To explore STD transmission networks, DSTDP is engaged in two innovative studies that kicked-off in 2018: the Network Epidemiology of Syphilis Transmission (NEST) and the Combined HIV and STD Prevention and Care for Vulnerable Men who Have Sex with Men (MSM) and Transgender Women via Network Methods (MATRIX). NEST, funding three jurisdictions—Baltimore City, Ohio State University, and University of Illinois at Chicago—is a 3-year longitudinal study focused on sexual and social networks of MSM at high risk for syphilis and their intersection with the health care system. MATRIX aims to improve HIV and STD prevention and care for MSM and

NOFO Corner

This year we had four Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) release to support development of STD training curriculums, enhanced STD surveillance, and innovative approaches to disease intervention.

Disease Intervention Training Centers (DITC) (PS20-2003) NOFO:

The [DITC NOFO](#) funding will support a network of disease intervention curriculum development and regional training centers serving local and state health jurisdictions throughout the US to modernize Disease Intervention Specialist staff knowledge and skills and prepare this critical public health workforce for certification. Applications closed November 26, 2019.

National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers (NNPTC) (PS20-2004) NOFO:

The [NNPTC NOFO](#) is for a network of STD expert clinicians to develop curriculum and provide regional training, technical assistance and health care systems-level capacity building to increase availability and accessibility of a trained and skilled STD clinical workforce to prevent and control STDs according to the STD Treatment Guidelines and the STD Quality Clinical Services recommendations. A secondary goal is to increase fellows who remain in STD academic and/or public health careers. Applications closed November 12, 2019.

Leveraging State of the Art Science Continued

STD Transmission Studies Continued

transgender women in two local settings—New York City and North Carolina—for the 3-year project. The data collected from these two projects will inform our models of STD transmission dynamics, resource allocation decisions, and cutting-edge interventions for MSM vulnerable to syphilis acquisition.

Technology Advancements in Public Health Surveillance: Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources & Clinical Decision Support

DSTDP is using a new technique to report case data from clinical facilities by leveraging electronic health records to send automated case reports with a constant information exchange capability to public health officials. Since being pilot tested, this electronic case reporting (ECR) method is being deployed in three states—Oregon, Georgia, and Illinois—and their participating health care clinics. This ECR technology enhances the laboratory case report data with demographic, epidemiologic, and clinical information such as treatment. DSTDP, working with Georgia Institute of Technology, has also devised a Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) based approach to create a continuous data feed among clinics and health departments. This approach was piloted with Indiana Network of Patient Care and is now being deployed at the Medical University of South Carolina.

In addition to FHIR, we are working on a clinical decision support (CDS) system that helps clinicians make decisions about screening and treatment for their patients based on current diagnostic and treatment guidelines. Currently, our Division has partnered with the National Association of Community Health Centers and Alliance-Chicago to pilot and evaluate a CDS tool for gonorrhea treatment. With this initial groundwork, we are eager to see how FHIR and CDS systems will begin changing the current healthcare landscape and solve some of the challenges we face in bringing to scale STD screening and timely treatment recommendations in the US.

Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies Network (SET-NET) Project

This year, DSTDP collaborated with the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities in the development of core variables relevant to congenital conditions including congenital syphilis for the [Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies Network \(SET-NET\)](#). SET-NET was established to provide an accurate picture of the impact of emerging threats during pregnancy by providing one surveillance system to link pregnancy exposures to infant outcomes. The network was developed to be used for any emerging or

NOFO Corner Continued

STD Surveillance Network (SSuN) (PS19-1907) NOFO:

Established in 2005, our [STD Surveillance Network \(SSuN\)](#) just entered the 4th five year cycle and continues to provide enhanced behavioral, demographic, and clinical surveillance information to better understand the epidemiology and impact of STDs to inform prevention efforts. Eleven state and local health departments with a project period running through September 29, 2024 were funded. Building on lessons learned from previous SSuN cycles, we're excited to deploy innovative strategies and best practices in this cycle to further our understanding of emergent issues in the field of STD surveillance such as adverse outcomes of STIs that, once validated, could be deployed in all state and local health departments.

Strengthening STD Prevention and Control for Health Departments (STD PCHD) (PS19-1901) NOFO:

[STD PCHD](#) was awarded to 59 state, local, and territorial health departments January 1, 2019 with the aim to prevent and control three major STDs—chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis, including congenital syphilis—through surveillance, disease investigation and intervention, promotion of CDC recommendations, promotion of STD prevention and policy, and data use for program improvement. The NOFO is designed to be flexible to address the diversity of STD populations and programs in the US. Currently, DSTDP is finalizing the performance measures for this NOFO with anticipated reporting beginning May 2020.

Leveraging State of the Art Science Continued

SET-NET Project Continued

concerning maternal/infant condition by state and local health departments and CDC. As this system is designed for longitudinal surveillance, the data generated will be used for public health action to inform medical care and link families to appropriate services. Twelve jurisdictions were funded for the project to work on emerging health threats such as Zika, congenital syphilis, and hepatitis C. Of the 12 sites, three—Arizona, California, and Georgia—are working on congenital syphilis.

Coming 2020

Recommendations for Quality Clinical Services Guidelines

As some of you may have heard, we have developed a companion document to our STD Treatment Guidelines focused on quality STD care services that should be available in clinical settings serving individuals vulnerable to STI acquisition. The MMWR *Recommendations for Providing Quality Sexually Transmitted Diseases Clinical Services, 2020* will be available January 2nd.

Update to the 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines

In June, we held our STD Treatment Guidelines Meeting to review the scientific literature relevant to the clinical management and treatment of sexually transmitted infections since the publication of the 2015 guidelines. We are currently reviewing the evidence presented at the meeting and aim to release the revised guidelines with an updated mobile app in 2020.

2020 STD Prevention Conference

The 2020 STD Prevention Conference returns to Atlanta, Georgia, September 14-17, 2020. This year's conference theme: "2020 Vision: Disrupting Epidemics and Dismantling Disparities" comes at an exciting and challenging time as we encounter unprecedented rates of STDs and technological advancements that continue to transform social networks, our health care delivery system and STD prevention practices. We hope to see you at the conference! The call for abstracts is now open and closes March 11, 2020. Please visit the [conference website](#) to stay up-to-date on the latest conference news.

Resource Spotlight

- **NEW! DSTDP STD Overview 1-Pager** – This handout outlines key information on rising STDs and what CDC and HHS are doing to stem the increases.
- **[Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States, 2019 \(2019 AR Threats Report\)](#)** – The report, an update of the 2013 AR Threats Report, includes information about the most alarming antibiotic-resistant pathogens in the US. Drug-resistant gonorrhea remains an urgent-level threat and *Mycoplasma genitalium* has been added to the "watch list".
- **[NCSD STD Engage 2019 Presentations](#)** – Weren't able to attend NCSD's annual meeting this year? You can view all the great presentations online.
- **[State of STDs Infographic](#)** – Customizable infographic for your state's STD trends.