Prevalence and Correlates of Pharyngeal Gonorrhea Among Young People Attending Public STD Clinics

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BACKGROUND
- Highest reported rates of gonorrhea among those 15-24 years of age
- Contribution of oral sex to gonorrhea transmission among young people may be higher than expected given:
  - Relatively high prevalence of oral sex among this population
  - Low prevalence of condom use for oral sex
  - Difficulty in eradicating pharyngeal gonorrhea with treatments used for urogenital and rectal gonorrhea

OBJECTIVE
- To identify factors associated with pharyngeal gonorrhea among young people

METHODS
- Cross-sectional study of clients attending public STD clinics in Los Angeles County
- Those included in this analysis were:
  - ages 15 – 24 years
  - reported oral sex in past 90 days
  - tested for pharyngeal gonorrhea
- Data collected from May 2006 – December 2007 using electronic records including:
  - Demographics
  - Sexual practice and risk behavior data
  - Laboratory testing data
- Factors associated with pharyngeal gonorrhea assessed with hierarchical regression models using generalized estimating equations

RESULTS
- A total of 3,992 clients were eligible and included in this analysis
- The median age was 21 years and more than half (53.4%) were male
- Among men 23% (n=482) reported sex with men
- The majority identified as African American (47.7%) or Hispanic (36.7%)

- The overall prevalence of pharyngeal gonorrhea was 5.9% (n=233) and was higher among MSM (10.4%) as compared to MSW (5.1%) and women (5.5%)
- Among both men and women, the highest prevalence of pharyngeal gonorrhea was among those who also had urogenital or rectal gonorrhea (Figures 1-3)
- After adjusting age, race/ethnicity, and reason for visit (i.e., STD contact), concurrent infection with gonorrhea at a non-pharyngeal site was the strongest predictor of pharyngeal gonorrhea (Table 1)

CONCLUSIONS
- Prevalence of pharyngeal gonorrhea among young people was relatively high
- Prevalence of pharyngeal gonorrhea significantly higher among those with concurrent non-pharyngeal gonorrhea, even after adjusting for other factors
- These findings support the utility of pharyngeal screening among young people who report oral sex, particularly those with a concurrent infection at another anatomical site