Assessing the added value of internet partner services for syphilis and HIV

Internet partner services (IPS) is the process of notifying named sexual partners to a newly diagnosed syphilis or HIV patient, where the only contact information for that partner is an email address or website handle. San Francisco STD Prevention and Control Services implemented IPS over a decade ago. We examined IPS data collected between 2006 and 2011 from newly diagnosed HIV and syphilis index patients and the subsequent outcomes of their partner investigations. Between 2006 and 2011, 4,255 partners were elicited from syphilis cases and 3,607 partners from HIV cases. Of these partners, 645 from syphilis index cases and 691 from HIV index cases only had internet contact information. Overall, 47.1% and 46.6% of the syphilis and HIV internet partners, respectively, were successfully contacted and resulted in additional contact information being gathered. Of the syphilis internet partners with updated contact information, 129 (42.4%) were either presumptively treated or brought to treatment, representing an increase of 7.2% in successful partner service outcomes. Among the HIV internet contacts, 55 (17.1%) were tested for HIV, a 7.9% increase in successful partner outcomes. By developing and maintaining IPS infrastructure in San Francisco, a substantially larger proportion of partners were able to be contacted by Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) and successful outcomes of partner services increased for both syphilis and HIV. KB