Knowledge, Practices and Attitudes of Youth Providers about STI, HIV Testing, and PrEP

Monica Schwarz Josten, MD¹,², Susana Keeshin, MD¹

¹University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT ²Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA

Background

• In 2016 over half of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and 21% of new HIV infections were among youth age 15 to 24 in the U.S.¹,²
• Latest Utah data from 2016, showed that youth accounted for 61% of chlamydia, 34% of gonorrhea, 26% of primary and secondary syphilis and 22% of new HIV infections³,⁴
• HIV testing in Utah is low with 25.6% of adults ever tested and there is no testing data for youth⁵

Methods

An anonymous email-based survey was sent to 396 youth providers in Utah during an eight week span in 2017. 102 (26%) responded and analysis was limited to 83 (21%) providers who reported caring for patients age 15 to 24.

Results

Provider characteristics:
• Median age: 35.5 years
• Median years out of residency: 8.5
• Most were female (54%), self-identified as Caucasian (86%), attending level physicians (70%), in an urban practice setting (61%)

HIV testing:
• Over half identified as comfortable screening for HIV
• Approximately 75% were familiar with CDC HIV testing guidelines. However, only 16% report always or often testing youth for HIV
• Providers were more likely to screen for HIV in older patients
• Common reasons for rarely or never offering testing included: belief the patient panel is not sexually active, low prevalence of HIV and provider discomfort in discussing sexual behaviors

Factors that increased the likelihood of offering an HIV test included: patient request, men who report sex with men, prior STI or a history of injection drug use

Figure 1: Provider given reasons for not offering HIV testing to youth patients

Figure 2: Patient characteristics affecting the likelihood of provider offered HIV testing

Figure 3: Provider comfort level offering PrEP by patient age

Conclusions

In Utah, the majority of providers are familiar with CDC HIV testing guidelines; however, testing remains low. This may be due to misconceptions around HIV risk and provider comfort. This is a missed opportunity for early detection of HIV in youth with known high STI rates and a comparable national HIV rate. Youth providers are not familiar with PrEP but they would like further education.

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References: