

2008 National STD Prevention Conference

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2008 National STD Prevention Conference Draws Nation's Public Health Leaders Together to Confront Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Chicago (March 10, 2008) – More than 1,300 public health, medical and academic experts will gather in Chicago today for the 2008 National Sexually transmitted Disease (STD) Prevention Conference, the only U.S. conference focused exclusively on reducing the burden of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

In the three-day conference, researchers will present findings from more than 400 scientific studies and public health program assessments that shed light on the latest STD prevention efforts and challenges, as well as strategies to effectively diagnose and treat the millions of Americans infected with STDs.

While STD prevention programs have made substantial progress over the past decade, CDC estimates that approximately 19 million new STD infections occur annually in the United States. STDs such as chlamydia and gonorrhea are major causes of infertility among women, and these and other common STDs can increase the risk of HIV transmission for both women and men.

Data presented at this year's conference show that STDs remain a major cause of health disparities in the United States. Numerous studies show that young people; African-Americans; men who have sex with men; and individuals living in poverty or who have limited access to healthcare have disproportionately high rates of STDs. STDs also have a substantial economic impact, costing the U.S. health care system as much as \$15.5 billion annually.

“Sexually transmitted diseases remain a significant public health threat, but one that can be overcome,” said Kevin Fenton, M.D., director of CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention. “We've achieved important successes in recent years, from increased chlamydia screening among young women to declines in syphilis among African-

Americans and women of all races. But for the millions of people whose health remains at risk, our continued commitment to STD prevention is essential.”

Among other topics, research presented at the conference will examine the prevalence of STDs among adolescent women, the disproportionate impact of STDs among African-Americans and continued syphilis increases among gay and bisexual men.

Conference presentations also will highlight missed opportunities for STD screening and treatment, as well as new strategies that public health institutions are using to reach people at risk. Public health experts also will discuss opportunities for integrating services that enhance HIV prevention and viral hepatitis prevention.

“This conference comes at a time of real opportunity for reducing STDs in America,” said John M. Douglas, Jr., M.D., director of CDC’s Division of STD Prevention. “While it is also a time of major challenges, there are many practical solutions to reduce the burden of STDs. Our task is to maximize the use of these new tools, from vaccines to innovative STD screening and treatment approaches, while strengthening traditional public health efforts and infrastructure.”

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The National STD Prevention Conference, held biennially, is the only major U.S. conference that focuses exclusively on advances and challenges in efforts to halt the spread of these serious diseases. It is sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with support from the American Sexually Transmitted Disease Association (ASTDA), the American Social Health Association (ASHA), and the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD). For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/stdconference.

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