

TITLE: What a Cluster: Novel Ways to Identify, Locate and Connect Persons Involved in a Complex STI Investigation

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: No

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Public Health Professionals who investigate notifiable diseases specifically sexually transmitted infections, students with an interest in infectious disease contact investigations and outbreaks, researchers who help identify new risk factors and ways to target outreach and prevention, and policy makers whose understanding of the complex social and behavioral nature of STI transmission is crucial to decreasing the burden of disease in our community.

ABSTRACT: Problem or Background: The continued rise in rates of STIs, fueled by the complex social, behavioral and environmental conditions of our communities, require new ways to identify persons exposed to STIs.

Purpose: To retrospectively review a STI cluster in Washington County to describe the relationship between sexual behaviors, illicit drug use and social determinants of health.

Methods: Detailed case review with extensive contact tracing and follow-up. Identifying social clusters and links among injection drug populations, those with current or a history of incarceration, Hepatitis C co-morbidity, homelessness and/or exchanging sex for money or drugs. Use of novel approaches such as Vinelink, etc allowing for quick detection of contacts and prompt treatment and investigation.

Results/outcomes: At least twenty-four people were identified in this cluster, which included gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis cases. Findings from this review incorporate current or recent methamphetamine/injection drug use, current or history of incarceration, Hepatitis C co-morbidity, homelessness and exchanging sex for money or drugs. The investigation is still ongoing with pending contact follow-up.

Conclusions: Implications for public health practice consist of the need for innovative investigation practices, implementation of evidence-based clinical and prevention strategies, collaboration among traditional and non-traditional partners, and advocacy for funding and policies to support efforts to address the social determinants of health

OBJECTIVE(S): Discuss the relationship between illicit drug use, social determinants of health and sexually transmitted infections. Identify innovative strategies to investigate sexually transmitted infection cases. Discuss the importance of evidence-based clinical and prevention strategies.
