

US Rates of Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis up in 2006: CDC

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By Megan Rauscher

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) Nov 13 - Reported cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis increased between 2005 and 2006 in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2006 Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance report, released Tuesday.

"It is clear that STDs continue to have a significant impact on the health of millions of Americans," said Dr. John M. Douglas, Jr., director of the division of STD prevention, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention at CDC.

"Increases in all three of these STDs reported to CDC during 2006 underscore the continued need for vigilance in prevention, screening and treatment efforts, and racial disparities across all STDs indicate that these efforts are especially needed among racial and ethnic minorities."

In 2006, 1,030,911 cases of chlamydia were reported to CDC. "This represents an all-time high for reported chlamydia cases and accounts for the largest number of cases reported to CDC for any condition," Dr. Douglas said. It also represents a 5.6% increase from the 976,445 cases reported in 2005.

"While this may reflect a rise in actual infections, much of this recent increase is most likely due to expanded chlamydia screening in the US as well as the increased use of more sensitive testing technology," Dr. Douglas noted. "Even with these improvements, however, most cases of chlamydia in the US remain undiagnosed and unreported."

Young women aged 15 to 19 years had the highest chlamydia rates, followed by women aged 20 to 24 years. African-American women are disproportionately affected by chlamydia.

For gonorrhea, 358,366 cases were reported to CDC in 2006, making it the second most commonly reported infectious disease in the US after chlamydia. In 2006, the gonorrhea rate was 120.9 cases per 100,000 population, an increase of 5.5% since 2005. "This is the second year of increases in gonorrhea rates following relative stability since 1997," Dr. Douglas noted.

"The racial disparities in diagnoses of gonorrhea are stark," he also pointed out, with African Americans accounting for 69% of reported gonorrhea cases in 2006.

Overall, 13.8% of gonorrhea isolates tested in 2006 demonstrated resistance to fluoroquinolones, further supporting the CDC's April 2007 announcement that this class of antibiotics should no longer be used to treat any cases of gonorrhea in the US.

As for primary and secondary syphilis, rates declined throughout the 1990s and reached an all-time low in 2000, but over the past 6 years the syphilis rate in the US has been climbing, driven largely by increases among men who have sex with men.

Between 2005 and 2006, rates increased 13.8%, from 2.9 to 3.3 cases per 100,000 population. A total of 9,756 cases of primary and secondary syphilis were reported in 2006, up from 8,724 in 2005.

"Rates of syphilis still remain at an extremely low level; however, the recent increases point to the need for ongoing vigilance in addressing this recent resurgence," Dr. Douglas said.