

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

Kyle T Bernstein, Robert Kohn, Wendy Wolf, Frank Strona, Charles Fann, Susan Philip

Background: 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. Although IPS is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, limited data is available regarding outcomes and the benefits to public health. San Francisco STD Prevention and Control Services has implemented IPS for over a decade. IPS data collected between 2006 and 2011 from newly diagnosed HIV and syphilis index patients and the outcomes of their partner investigations were examined.

Methods: The proportion of partners with only internet contact information who, through IPS, had more contact information gathered was calculated. Additionally, the proportion of these partners who were presumptively treated or brought to treatment (for syphilis investigation) or who were tested for HIV (for HIV investigation) was also examined.

Results: 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 more contact information being gathered. Of the syphilis internet partners with updated contact information, 129 (42.4%) were either presumptively treated or brought to treatment and represented 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.

Conclusions: By developing and maintain 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.

Word Count: 293

Key Words: Partner Services, HIV, Syphilis

Syphilis	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	TOTAL
Total Partners	623	396	856	767	758	855	4255
Named Partners	438	322	686	655	713	796	3610
Internet Partners	185	74	170	112	45	59	645
Internet --> Named	83	39	112	28	25	17	304
Proportion of Internet --> Named	44.9%	52.7%	65.9%	25.0%	55.6%	28.8%	47.1%
Successes among Internet --> Named	40	22	47	10	7	3	129
% of success among Internet --> Named	48.2%	56.4%	42.0%	35.7%	28.0%	17.6%	42.4%
Successes among Named	196	166	353	345	346	390	1796
Increase in Success from IPS	20.4%	13.3%	13.3%	2.9%	2.0%	0.8%	7.2%
HIV	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	TOTAL
Total Partners	585	444	701	529	677	671	3607
Named Partners	429	311	540	436	610	590	2916
Internet Partners	156	133	161	93	67	81	691
Internet --> Named	64	87	95	23	35	18	322
Proportion of Internet --> Named	41.0%	65.4%	59.0%	24.7%	52.2%	22.2%	46.6%
Successes among Internet --> Named	14	15	10	4	9	3	55
% of success among Internet --> Named	21.9%	17.2%	10.5%	17.4%	25.7%	16.7%	17.1%
Successes among Named	83	100	138	109	144	123	697
Increase in Success from IPS	16.9%	15.0%	7.2%	3.7%	6.3%	2.4%	7.9%