Addressing antenatal sexually transmitted infections in a high HIV prevalence context: A qualitative study about partner notification in Botswana

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Background

Partner notification is essential to the management of sexually transmitted infections (STI). The process involves identifying sex partners, notifying about exposure, and providing counselling and treatment to:

- prevent reinfection of the index patient,
- reduce the community burden of infection, and
- prevent adverse health outcomes.

Partner notification and treatment rates are low.

Source: Taleghani (2018)

Methods

- In-depth interviews with 15 women diagnosed with curable STIs during antenatal care at Princess Marina Hospital in Gaborone, Botswana.
- Goal was to improve understanding of women’s experiences and preferences related to partner notification and treatment for curable STIs.
- Interview transcripts assessed for frequently used codes, patterns,& illustrative quotations.

Results

- All current partners were notified, 2 women were no longer with their partners.
- Less than half of partners were treated and many received delayed treatment.
- Partner treatment barriers included:
 - Work schedule
 - No contact slip
 - Women didn’t have information
- Most women preferred to accompany partners to clinic (compared to him going alone or bringing him treatment).
- Experiences and preferences did not differ by HIV infection status.

Theme	Quote
Partners were notified in person	<i>I didn't go around in circles, I got in and said, "I was in [the clinic] and there were people testing for STDs so I also tested, but came back positive...now you can read these papers and see what kind of disease it is."</i>
Few partners reacted badly	<i>Now he is shouting at me... "What did you check for?" saying "you like testing yourself for so many things!" .."So you think I sleep around with girls, am I sick?" Right then we had sex again because he was shouting right... I was calming him down.</i>
Many women didn't have enough information for partners	<i>"no when you get to the hospital, there's no evidence that I can give you, when you get to the hospital you tell them my partner was tested and she was found with STI's."</i>
Women preferred to accompany partners to clinic	<i>But if you give me the paper [contact slip] I'm going to need to go with him because if I don't he won't do it [get treated].</i>
Women did not prefer expedited partner therapy	<i>Ah, it wasn't going to be good. He was going to refuse... He was going to ask himself what pills I was giving to him that he hasn't been told about.</i>

Conclusion

Pregnant women were willing to notify partners; however, there were barriers to partner treatment. Efforts are needed to increase STI knowledge and overcome logistical barriers to ensure prompt partner treatment, and reduce rates of re-infection during pregnancy and subsequent adverse health outcomes.

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Saving Lives

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