



ACTION MEMO

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Atlanta, Georgia

November 15, 2002

Dear HIV/STD Program Directors:

No doubt many of you are aware of CDC's recent report showing an increase in national syphilis rates for the first time in over a decade ("Primary and Secondary Syphilis - United States 2001" MMWR 2002 vol 51:971-973). Also, you may be aware of the efforts CDC has undertaken over the past 24 months to alert the public health community to the resurgence of STDs and high risk behaviors among various MSM communities across the United States.

Obviously, there is no one reason for this resurgence of unsafe behaviors -- nor is there a simple or single means of responding. But it is imperative that we respond in a timely and competent manner.

Listed below are several action steps which we are recommending that you undertake immediately. At the same time, CDC will work with the leadership of NASTAD and NCSD to explore further strategies for addressing this evolving public health challenge.

- Meet with the owners of gay bars/baths/businesses and other community leaders in your jurisdictions to inform them of resurgent STDs among MSM, to promote the availability of publicly funded STD diagnostic and treatment services and to encourage them to promote safer sex practices.
- Communicate with your state and county medical associations to inform them of national and local STD trends among MSM, to emphasize their important role in offering STD diagnostic and treatment services to sexually active MSM under care for HIV disease and to encourage them to promote safer sexual practices.
- Ensure that Community Planning Groups (CPGs) have current epidemiologic information on HIV and STD trends among MSM in your jurisdictions.
- Ensure that the current HIV prevention community plans for your jurisdictions accurately reflect the burden of HIV transmission among MSM and that state and federal HIV prevention funds are allocated in a manner consistent with the magnitude of the problem.
- Take active steps to ensure that health department staff employed in STD clinics, HIV counseling and testing sites and other public venues serving MSM are aware of recent national and local HIV/STD trends, provide counseling to reduce risk of HIV and other STDs, and offer, or refer, for HIV and STD services.
- Promote the use of STD diagnostic and treatment services among sexually active HIV(+) MSM.
- Improve the collection of information about gender of sex partners for persons reported with STDs.

Please contact your CDC project officer if you need technical assistance to: better characterize the HIV/STD trends among MSM populations in your jurisdictions, accurately

assess the current level of HIV/STD service needs, or develop effective HIV/STD prevention approaches.

Your active support is essential to achieving improved health outcomes for these populations. Should you wish to discuss this matter in further detail or if you have specific suggestions for CDC, please do not hesitate to call me at 404-639-8002.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Valdiserri". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Ronald O. Valdiserri, M.D., M.P.H.

Deputy Director

National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention

cc: Dr. Sevgi Aral, CDC
Dr. Harold Jaffe, CDC
Dr. Robert Janssen, CDC
Ms. Candice Nowicki-Lehnherr, CDC
Ms. Teresa Raphael, NCSD
Ms. Julie Scofield, NASTAD