

recommend continuing prevention and awareness campaigns targeting high risk groups.

Key messages:

- MSM and women remain high-risk populations regarding STIs among the patient population of general practitioners.
- Continuous STI surveillance is necessary to monitor STI related healthcare needs and adapt prevention programs.

Sexually Transmitted Infections surveillance among the patient population in Belgian general practice

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Background:

In Europe, prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) is continuously increasing. The Belgian public health institute ensures STI surveillance in general practices through the Sentinel General Practitioners (SGP) network. Between 2015 and 2020, the SGP reported cases for 5 STIs: chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis herpes and genital warts. The objective is the surveillance of STI in primary care.

Methods:

General practitioners (GPs) report STI cases through the SGP network on a voluntary basis, using an online questionnaire. This questionnaire is developed in cooperation with STI experts, as well as a steering committee group composed of GPs and representatives of regional health agencies.

Results:

In total 1009 cases were registered from 2015 until 2020 within the SGP network. 59.8% of patients consulting for STIs were men, of which 63.5% had exclusively heterosexual contacts and 24.8% are Men who have sex with Men (MSM). 91.8% of women had exclusively heterosexual contacts. Chlamydia was the most common STI (57.4%). Women are more likely to be diagnosed with chlamydia (OR 1.6; 95% CI 1.1-2.2) and herpes (OR 1.7; 95% CI 1.0-2.9) than men. Men represented most of the gonorrhoea (79.77%) and syphilis (86.7%) cases. Having bi- or homosexual contacts increases the likelihood of getting gonorrhoea (OR 3.3; 95% CI 2.1-5.1) and syphilis (OR 13.7; 95% CI 7.4-25.3). Incidence of Chlamydia is estimated at 68.81/100000, and incidence of gonorrhoea at 21.11/100000 over 6 years.

Conclusions:

We observe a slight increase in chlamydia and gonorrhoea incidence in the Belgian population over the study period. MSM are at higher risk of STI and represent an overwhelming proportion of syphilis cases. Being a woman is associated with higher risk of acquiring chlamydia and herpes infection. We