September 4, 2018

Dear Colleague,

The 2018 National STD Prevention Conference has come and gone. This conference was a result of strategic partnerships within our field including partnerships with the American STD Association, the American Sexual Health Association, the National Coalition of STD Directors, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Pan American Health Organization.

This year, we welcomed more than 1200 of our partners and stakeholders from State and local health departments, community-based organizations, researchers, and advocates to DC. Throughout the week, attendees treated us to more than 400 presentations and posters. Over three days’ worth of sessions, we engaged in rich discussions about the biggest topics and trends in STD prevention, and built connections with new and interesting colleagues.

If you weren’t able to join us in DC, I wanted to share just a flavor of the week:

- We enjoyed a wonderful opening plenary, featuring Dr. Demetre Daskalakis from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

  Dr. Daskalakis highlighted some of New York City’s innovative and important efforts to bring together the HIV and STD communities to tackle the intersecting epidemics – which encapsulated our theme for the week: Intersecting Epidemics. Integrated Solutions.

- We awarded Dr. Sue Blank with the Jack N. Spencer award.

  She has dedicated her career to STD prevention for more than 25 years and, during her tenure, she has led or played a pivotal role in virtually every part of NYC’s large and complex STD program. I am sure you would all agree that she was the perfect choice for this honor.
I joined Dr. Ned Hook from the University of Alabama School of Medicine, Dr. Michael Fraser of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), and David Harvey with the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD), in a press briefing highlighting preliminary 2017 national STD surveillance data.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing steep increases in diagnosed chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis. But I think we are all also greatly encouraged by the collective efforts of our community. We are collaborating across state lines and through the walls of our individual offices at federal agencies and national organizations to turn the tide of rising STDs in a way I've never seen in my decades-long career.

I’m including at the bottom of this e-mail some language about the findings and implications that you can consider including in your newsletters and communications with stakeholders. You can also see a copy of the press release and the transcript online.

Two new innovative events were introduced to the conference agenda: a Meet the Experts panel discussion and “STeD Talks.”

Holders of a special “golden ticket” had the opportunity to meet a panel of six diverse experts in our field to pick their brains about their areas of expertise and discuss career development and advancement.
And modeled after the world-famous “TED Talks”, eight presenters gave rapid-fire “STeD talks.” After each presentation, audience members answered a multiple-choice poll question through our STD Prevention Conference App. The moderators then opened the floor for a lively discussion about the different answers.

- The conference encouraged attendees to take their conversations and lessons-learned outside the walls of the meeting space using social media.

Our NPIN colleagues hosted a special networking event, including a presentation about how to create better social media content, followed by an engaging Q&A session and discussion. If you couldn’t make it, you can join the NPIN Community where slides will be posted next week.

And we were happy to highlight the work of poster presenters through our special #PickMyPoster contest. Presenters took a selfie or a photo of their poster, posted it on Twitter, and I got to enjoy breakfast with the winners the last morning of the conference. It was a joy for me to return to my local-level roots and hear about the work you are all doing on the ground.

It was such a fun and exciting week and we are so grateful to the conference committee and hosts.

After a good rest this Labor Day weekend, I am excited to get back to work. We have so much rewarding work left to do.

The next big project we’ll tackle is our annual STD Surveillance Report, which we’ll release at the end of September. Please stay tuned.

Sincerely,

Gail Bolan, MD
Director, Division of STD Prevention
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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Stay in touch with the Division of STD Prevention by following @CDCSTD on Twitter and CDC STD on Facebook.
According to preliminary surveillance data released today at the 2018 STD Prevention Conference, nearly 2.3 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were diagnosed in the United States in 2017. This surpassed the previous record set in 2016 by more than 200,000 cases and marked the fourth consecutive year of sharp increases in these sexually transmitted diseases.

The threat of untreatable gonorrhea persists in the United States. Reports of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea abroad have only reinforced those concerns, although we’ve not yet seen a confirmed treatment failure in the U.S. when using the currently recommended two-drug combination therapy.

A renewed commitment from health care providers — who are encouraged to make STD screening and timely treatment a standard part of medical care, especially for the populations most affected — is an important component to reverse current trends.