

Keeping Pace with Modern Sexual Health: Electronic Test Results Notification Puts Patients in the Driver's Seat

STD Prevention **SUCCESS STORIES**



Chlamydia and gonorrhea are two of the most commonly reported sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the United States.

These STIs account for an estimated [\\$962 million in direct medical costs each year](#)—a significant burden that impacts public health and well-being—and claims a substantial amount of time and energy from healthcare staff who provide medical support and treatment. Louisiana has reported among the highest – if not the highest – chlamydia and gonorrhea rates in the country since 2009. To turn the tide, health officials in the state are harnessing the convenience of technology to save staff time and increase the number of patients treated for their infections.

Answering the call for modern, responsive STI health care

Amid rising STI case rates, people need convenient, quick, healthcare information more than ever to help with treatment and prevention options. One of the most effective tools to slow the spread of STIs is prompt reporting of results after testing, which allows a patient to get treatment and partner services more quickly and at higher rates.¹

To close the gap in results-reporting after testing, the Caddo Parish Health Unit (PHU) in Shreveport, Louisiana launched a new automated electronic process—delivering STI test results for chlamydia and gonorrhea via text or email. This embrace of technology to enhance STI treatment and prevention shows promise in keeping patients better connected to healthcare options, while also freeing up time and resources for healthcare providers.

“In Louisiana Parish Health Units, positive test results for chlamydia and gonorrhea are delivered by nurses, and this process, which includes up to two phone calls and one certified letter per positive patient, is usually time-consuming and less efficient. This drains time and energy that could be put to better use with direct patient interaction and care,” said Dr. Mohammad M. Rahman, a federal epidemiologist embedded in the Louisiana Department of Health.

The electronic test results notification process, ongoing in the Caddo PHU since 2018, has integrated well into the prevention and treatment process: during a one-year period of study, it helped raise overall treatment success for both chlamydia (74% to 89%) and gonorrhea (81% to 92%). This versatile option “helps healthcare providers keep pace with rising STI rates through the use of an innovative electronic tool that meets today’s client where they are in terms of access and engagement,” said Dr. Rahman.

5,432

patients tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea at Caddo PHU December 2018–December 2019

99.4%

of opt-in patients reported satisfaction with electronic STI test results notification

1 in 5

chlamydia and gonorrhea cases in Louisiana are diagnosed in the state’s PHUs



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for HIV/AIDS,
Viral Hepatitis, STD, and
TB Prevention

Empowering patients, protecting privacy

The process is designed to be seamless and user-friendly – a modern method to help people quickly access their test results and get on with their day. When a patient is tested for chlamydia or gonorrhea at the Caddo PHU, they opt in to receive their test results electronically. When those results are ready, they are notified via email or text that they can view them in a secure patient portal. Clients can also access additional STI prevention information at that time, including sexual partner notification guidance, which is a crucial component of STI prevention and treatment. “It’s that simple,” says Dr. Rahman. “It’s practical, private, and convenient. The client truly has control of their own personal health information.”

The proof is in the process

As Dr. Rahman and colleagues discuss in a recently [published paper](#),¹ the process has been well-received by patients and the healthcare workers who serve them. Patients who opted in to the automated process during the one-year period of study overwhelmingly agreed that electronic results notification was satisfactory and easy-to-use, and almost all preferred it over phone calls and/or letters. And overall treatment success increased for both chlamydia and gonorrhea.

“What’s been really encouraging is a decrease in the time between testing and treatment for people who test positive,” said Dr. Rahman. “We saw a 15% increase in timely treatment for chlamydia, and an 11% increase in timely treatment for gonorrhea.” Patients who opted in to electronic notification came in an average of almost three days earlier for treatment of chlamydia (from 13.4 to 10.7 days), and as much as two days earlier for gonorrhea treatment (from 11.3 to 9.2 days).

“These results are encouraging. The speed with which we can get people diagnosed and subsequently treated directly impacts how well we can halt the spread of chlamydia and gonorrhea, and stop these STIs from affecting patients’ long-term health.”



No looking back

Public health care continues to move in the direction of increased patient autonomy. In STI treatment and prevention, this trend offers hope for stopping the spread of STIs by helping people feel more at ease initiating efforts to diagnose, treat, or prevent infection—at a faster pace. In addition to the successful launch in the Caddo PHU, a simultaneous roll-out of the same electronic notification process in [Durham, North Carolina](#)² delivered the same promising results in client feedback: high satisfaction and ease of use. Both projects signal that this streamlined notification process is one that could be a great resource for other STI clinics around the country.

1. Rahman, MM, et al. Sex Trans Dis. 2021 https://journals.lww.com/stdjournal/Abstract/9000/Electronic_Messaging_for_Gonorrhea_and_Chlamydia.97545.aspx
2. Cope, AB, et al. Sex Trans Dis. 2019 https://journals.lww.com/stdjournal/Fulltext/2019/09000/Assessing_Patient_Opinions_About_Electronic.10.aspx

Nurses in Louisiana’s Caddo Parish Health Unit have welcomed the streamlined, electronic notification process:

“It’s a great project. It’s made things better for all, especially the patients. Having the results sent to their phone, often quicker than we could provide it to them, is a win-win. It also helps our daily workflow—we’re finding that we no longer have to follow up with as much as a quarter of our clients that we usually would have spent time trying to reach.”

— Yolanda Chandler,
Regional Nurse Manager,
Caddo PHU

Learn MORE at cdc.gov/std

Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) STD/HIV Prevention
[LDH Caddo Parish Health Unit](#)
[STI Testing Guidance](#)