

Shedding Light on Disease in the US: How STD Prevention Programs Benefit from Strong Data

STD Prevention **SUCCESS STORIES**

Within the last several years, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) have come charging back more resilient than ever before. How is CDC tackling this troubling resurgence? A multi-pronged strategy that embraces bigger, faster, stronger countermeasures. One weapon in the arsenal is better data, and at the forefront of this growing resource is CDC's Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance Network (SSuN) – an innovative information network that delivers enhanced, updated data on STDs.

Standard surveillance can be time-consuming and delayed, but with data from SSuN, a collaboration of competitively-selected state, county, and city health department sentinel sites, public health stakeholders can access and use updated, specific STD data delivered quickly to monitor and track rates for several STDs simultaneously.

11 current SSuN
surveillance
jurisdictions

69 (and counting)
analyses, presentations,
& publications using data
from SSuN

81% rate of compliance
with CDC recommended
gonorrhea treatment
method (SSuN data)

The breadth and depth of data from SSuN's various components informs public health decisions regarding crucial STD control and prevention strategies. Timely data snapshots delivered by SSuN, for various STDs, provide us with a better understanding of the burden of disease faced by different

Harnessing the Power of SSuN Data for STD Prevention

All across the country, SSuN data are providing an essential boost to STD prevention policies and practices.

SSuN data enhance the teamwork efforts of public health professionals in diverse locations: "By having SSuN participating jurisdictions collect the same data elements consistently, it provides us with a comparison group for trends that we are seeing in our jurisdiction. For example, if we see gonorrhea rates going up locally, we can use the SSuN data to determine if this is a local trend, or something that is happening on a broader scale. Personally, I also appreciate having SSuN colleagues around the country who have expertise across a variety of topics, and whom I can turn to for information about what's happening in their jurisdictions, or how they have solved a problem that we are having locally. I really value my network of SSuN colleagues." —*Roxanne Kerani, Public Health-Seattle and King County STD Program*

SSuN data help fill in the demographic gaps of patients seeking STD care by delivering random contact lists for follow-up: "We have been able to learn more about those diagnosed with gonorrhea using data like symptom history and insurance status to understand how and when our patients seek care. The hope is that with all the extra surveillance elements provided by SSuN, speaking more with our patients and speaking more with our providers, we will be able to understand and reduce the burden of gonorrhea in Philadelphia." —*Greta Anschutz, Philadelphia Department of Public Health*

SSuN data have helped create more robust surveillance methods: "SSuN Part B funding enabled the development of a data exchange transmission process with a large health information exchange partner; this new partnership allowed us to assess STD test utilization and prevalence based on standardized code sets, and to also provide evidence for why STD screening is important in this large private sector population." —*Joan Chow, Sexually Transmitted Disease Control Branch, California Department of Public Health*



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populations – including some of the communities that remain most vulnerable to these infections. SSuN data allows us to do what we cannot with routine case reporting alone: better understand sexual networks, STD care services, and view tangible evidence that shows where you live matters when it comes to STDs.

“SSuN is one of the few surveillance systems that integrates across multiple diseases,” said Mark Stenger, an epidemiologist and the SSuN co-project officer. For example, SSuN data offer the most extensive breakdown of HIV co-infection rates among persons diagnosed with gonorrhea or seeking care in STD clinics – providing information on which STDs are occurring more frequently with HIV infection in particular communities. These highly-specific data allow for better resource allocation and the tailoring of more effective treatment methods.

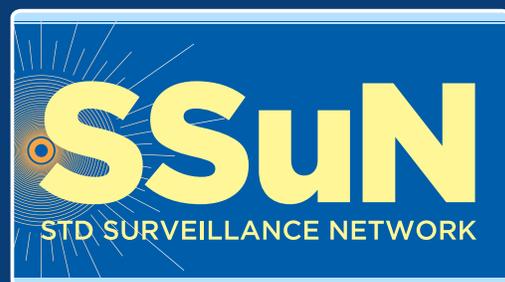
And SSuN is the only supplemental data source that sheds light on population-level gonorrhea trends in the U.S. – providing complete demographic, clinical, and behavioral information on an STD that is becoming increasingly harder to treat. Coupled with CDC’s Gonococcal Isolate Surveillance Project, SSuN helps clinicians and researchers monitor and combat emerging antibiotic resistance.

“Analyses of data from SSuN make a real difference in how people receive STD outreach and care,” said Stenger. SSuN data have helped:

- understand screening, diagnostic, and treatment practices for people seeking care in STD clinics in multiple states;
- monitor rates of Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) for gonorrhea cases;
- enhance our capacity to monitor rates of gonorrhea treatment adherence to CDC recommendations (which helps prevent drug resistance);
- evaluate compliance with appropriate screening practices for STD clinics; and
- illustrate the proportion of gonorrhea cases in men who have sex with other men (MSM – who are impacted by STDs at higher rates) and estimate rates of reported cases among MSM.

“All sources of information throughout the SSuN network combine to form a much more comprehensive picture of disease trends, prevention needs, and gaps in critical clinical services.”

– *Mark Stenger,
Epidemiologist & SSuN
Co-project Officer, CDC*



Learn MORE at cdc.gov/std/default.html

- [STD Surveillance Network \(SSuN\)](#)
- [Gonorrhea Fact Sheet](#)
- [STD Data & Statistics](#)