

Op-ed Letter

Dear Editor,

The time has come for our community to join the national effort to eliminate syphilis, one of this county's greatest racial disparities in health. Currently, syphilis is concentrated in a small number of U.S. counties, and ours is one of them. In 2003, syphilis affected our community at a rate of ___ cases/100,000 people, compared to the national rate of 2.2 cases/100,000 people.

Syphilis increases the chance of HIV transmission by 2-5 times. The disease progresses in stages. If left untreated, it can lead to cardiovascular and neurological disorders and blindness over a period of time. It can also be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy, leading to miscarriages, stillbirths, and health complications in the baby.

Government agencies and community groups launched a National Plan to Eliminate Syphilis from the United States. As a result, the National Syphilis Elimination Effort (SEE) was formed. A community coalition of **(include the types of members)** has joined the National SEE, and is embarking on activities to raise awareness and increase action in our community towards eliminating syphilis.

To eliminate this disease from our community, we need the support of community leaders, health care providers, and policy makers. Community leaders can help increase awareness and education about the need for syphilis screening, treatment, and prevention. Health care providers can help by screening and treating more patients. Policy makers must be aware of the impact of syphilis on the health of their constituents.

Syphilis is preventable and treatable. Its spread can be stopped. Syphilis prevention methods (or strategies) can include abstinence, monogamy, i.e., being faithful to a single sex partner, or using condoms consistently and correctly. These approaches can avoid risk (abstinence) or effectively reduce risk for getting syphilis (monogamy, consistent and correct condom use).

Let's work together to build awareness and outreach efforts, seizing this incredible opportunity to eliminate syphilis from our community now - while syphilis rates are still relatively low.

This is one challenge that we can overcome, if we all work together NOW.

Sincerely,

Author
Title
Organization
Contact Information