

Racial Disparities in Sexually Transmitted Disease, 2009

Michigan Department of Community Health

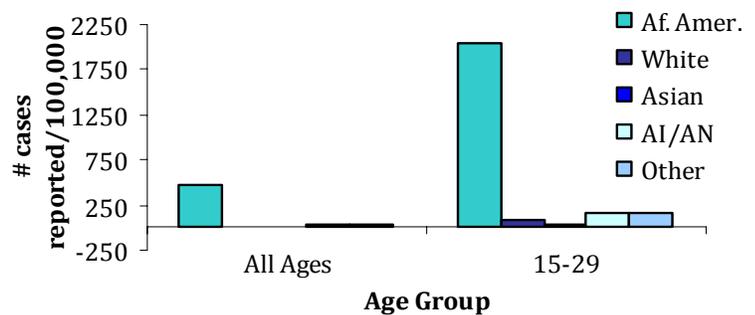
Key Findings

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) remain a major public health challenge in Michigan. This challenge is especially striking for communities of color, where these diseases have hit the hardest. In 2008, across the state, African Americans suffered from 28 times the rate of gonorrhea as Whites, and 10 times the rate of chlamydia. The counties of Berrien, Kalamazoo, Kent, Oakland, and Wayne had especially high rate ratios, demonstrating a heightened need to address disparities in these areas.

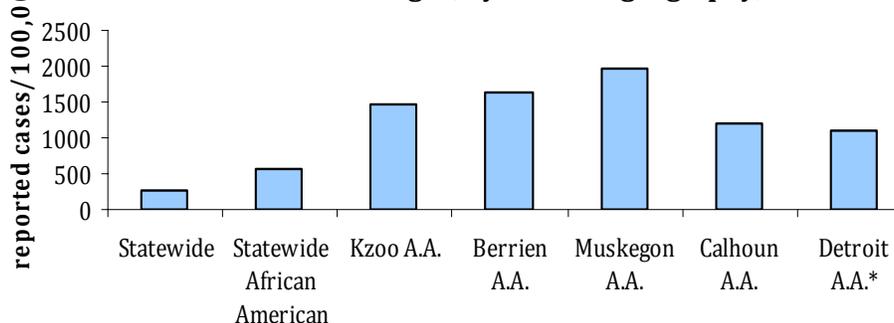
Gonorrhea

A general 17-year decline in gonorrhea occurred from 1986-2003. Since then, numbers have remained steady with 17,905 cases reported in 2008. This rate was substantially higher among African Americans (608) and those 15-29 years old (499). While the overall gonorrhea rate of 180 per 100,000 is high, ranking Michigan 7th in the nation for gonococcal infection, the rate for African Americans in certain geographic areas greatly exceeds that. The City of Detroit is a particular focus in Michigan for gonorrhea rates. In 2008, the rate in Detroit for 15-19 year olds was nearly 4,000 per 100,000 or over 22 times the statewide average. In 2008, Wayne County ranked 2nd in the entire country for the number of reported cases among counties. Chlamydia and gonorrhea can be easily cured with antibiotics. Left untreated, both can cause long-term complications such as chronic pelvic pain, ectopic pregnancy, and infertility. The presence of an STD can also increase the risk for HIV transmission.

Gonorrhea Rates in Michigan, by race, 2008



Gonorrhea Rates in Michigan, by race and geography, 2008



Chlamydia

In 1993, chlamydia first became reportable on a permanent basis in Michigan. As reporting has become more robust and testing technology has improved, the number of identified cases has increased annually, a trend also seen nationally. In 2008, there

were 46,555 chlamydia cases, a slight increase from 2007. The Michigan rate in 2008 was 468 cases per 100,000 and was significantly higher among females (694), 15-29 year olds (1281) and African Americans (1167). Increases in chlamydia are most likely the result of additional screening, but may also represent a true increase in disease burden. Research indicates that the majority of chlamydia cases go unreported, and that there may be twice as many cases than there are identified.

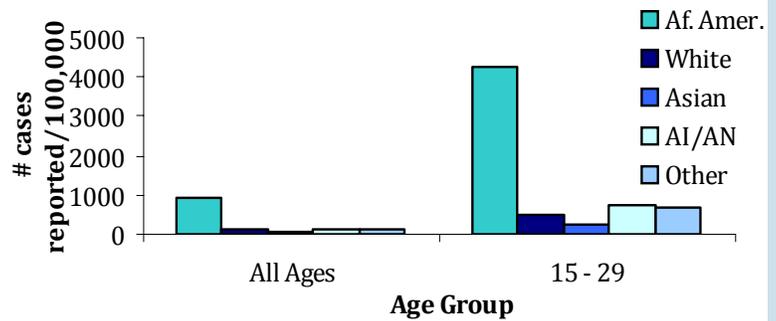
* estimated rate calculated with 2008 cases and population estimates from the American Community Survey (06-08) to account for changing population and cases with unknown race

Due to the fact that most chlamydial infections are asymptomatic, especially in females, increased screening is a major prevention focus for MDCH.

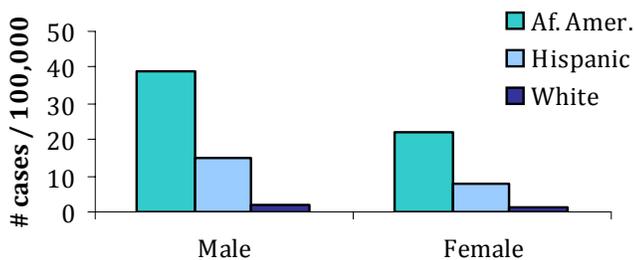
Syphilis

Syphilis infects far fewer people in Michigan than chlamydia or gonorrhea, but has more serious health consequences. Syphilis cases increased substantially in 2008, after several years of significantly low levels following an outbreak in 2002. African Americans account for 72% of all cases, yet are only 14.1% of the total Michigan population. The Detroit metro area suffers from twice the rate of infection as the rest of the state. The highest rates are seen in young African American MSM (Men who have Sex with Men), a new trend in Michigan that is mirrored nationally. In

Chlamydia Rates in Michigan, by race, 2008



Syphilis Rates in Michigan, by race and sex, 2008

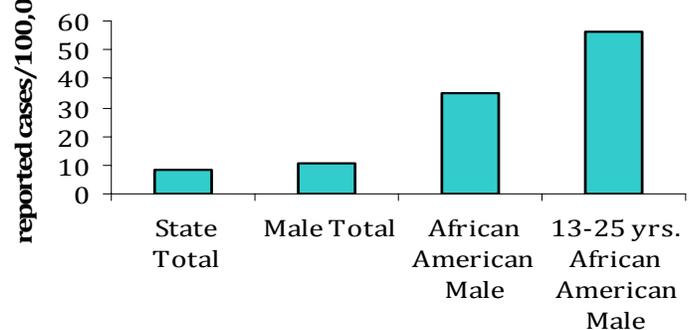


2008, the rate among African American men under 25 was over nine times the statewide average. Syphilis is a genital ulcerative disease that is highly infectious but easily treatable in its early stages. Left untreated, serious long-term complications such as brain, cardiovascular, and organ damage can occur with the most serious cases causing death. Syphilis presents additional risks during pregnancy; if infection is not identified and treated there is significant risk for birth defect or fetal death. Syphilis can also facilitate HIV infection.

Disparities in Michigan

STDs remain one of the most disparate health conditions in Michigan, with rates for young African Americans exponentially higher than other racial and ethnic groups. These disparities are addressed through targeted and appropriate public health programming, however the underlying social conditions that make these disparate outcomes possible must be recognized and addressed to improve the health of not only the affected minority communities, but the entire state. Addressing STD disparities will require increased awareness among affected communities of the prevalence of disease and the importance of screening, as well as a strong public health response to ensure the prioritization of disproportionately impacted communities.

Syphilis Rates in Michigan, 2008



For More Information contact STD epidemiologist Kathryn Macomber, MacomberK@michigan.gov, or email colormehealthy@michigan.gov for more information about health disparities in Michigan from the Michigan Department of Community Health

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