

Investigation of a Cluster of Syphilis and HIV Infections Associated with an Internet Pornography Site – Chicago, 2005-2006

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Sentinel Events

- In November 2005, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) received first report of the possible transmission of HIV occurring in a resident of a North-side Chicago apartment reported as a non-adherent carrier.
- In December 2005 to March 2006, CDPH disease control investigations link 2 HIV and 3 syphilis cases in persons residing at the same address; a syphilis case-patient names 22 sexual contacts as a part of an Internet Pornography Business

Internet-based Pornography Business

- Feature young Black and Latino men who have sex with men
- Men employed as “models” and paid to have sex at local “dormitory” for room, board, money
- Website features: free previews, members only services, photos, live webcams, live video chat, streaming video, stories, and web logs
- Offered sale of popular magazines, calendars, DVDs
- Scheduled sex acts broadcast live daily on Internet
- Related to private male escort service

Objectives

- To determine extent of outbreak
- To identify additional opportunities for disease intervention
- To prevent further transmission of syphilis and HIV in the city

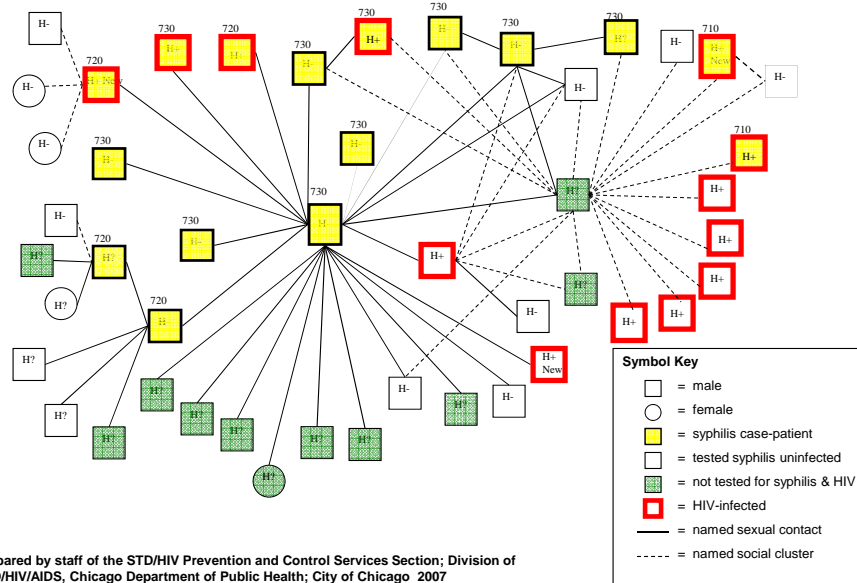
Methods

- Investigations were conducted by Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) according to CDC STD Intervention Guidelines
- Data obtained from:
 - Laboratory and provider surveillance reports
 - Disease intervention interview records
 - Medical chart review
- Epidemiologic Visual Case Analysis and cluster analysis

Results

- Dense sexual and social network involving 47 individuals with evidence of disease transmission
- Identified 19 employees of an Internet pornography business
 - Median age: 23 years (range 19-35)
 - All were African-American MSM
 - 9 (47%) HIV cases
 - 9 (47%) syphilis cases
 - Including 3 co-infections with syphilis/HIV

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Summary

- Among 47 individuals in the network
 - 13 (28%) HIV cases
 - including 3 newly diagnosed HIV positive
 - 16 (34%) syphilis cases
 - 2 primary, 4 secondary, 10 early latent cases
 - 6 (13%) co-infections with syphilis/HIV
 - 3 (6%) gonorrhea cases

Limitations

- Interview data relied on self-report
- All contacts may not be named
- All contacts were not interviewed
- All contacts were not tested

Health Department Interventions

- Mounting STD/HIV case investigations, community provider reports of continuing HIV exposures associated with the business
- Limited success intervening with clients and business owner; business owner made CDPH interactions forbidden among employees
- Owner non-response to CDPH orders to
 - Contact the health department to arrange a meeting
 - Attend a scheduled meeting to develop corrective action plan
- Prompts issuance of Notice of City Inspection to assess compliance with health, safety, business, and licensing codes



Discussion

- Evidence of disease transmission
- Mandate to respond to community reports of disease transmission
- Public Health responsibility to prevent and contain disease in the community
- Communicable diseases can be prevented by intervening with known sources or sites of infection
- Concern over exploitation of models, and nature of the work

Epilogue

The House Next Door
(May 9, 2007)



Porn House Illegal, City Rules The Miami Herald
(August 15, 2007)



The Best Little Sex Dorm in Miami
(August 16, 2007)

Miami orders porn house shut down The Miami Herald
(August 15, 2007)

Acknowledgements

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