Author's response to reviews

Title: Chlamydia Trachomatis Testing Among Young People: The Role of Anticipated and Experienced Stigma

Authors:

Kevin ATM Theunissen (kevin.theunissen@ggdzl.nl)
Arjan ER Bos (arjan.bos@ou.nl)
Christian JPA Hoebe (christian.hoebe@ggdzl.nl)
Gerjo Kok (g.kok@maastrichtuniversity.nl)
Stan Vluggen (s.vluggen@student.maastrichtuniversity.nl)
Rik Crutzen (rik.crutzen@maastrichtuniversity.nl)
Nicole HTM Dukers-Muijrs (nicole.dukers@ggdzl.nl)

Version: 2
Date: 12 December 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Please find enclosed our submission of our Original article entitled “Chlamydia Trachomatis Testing Among Young People: The Role of Anticipated and Experienced Stigma”.

Testing and treatment are the key elements of Chlamydia trachomatis (Ct) control strategies. Stigma regarding Ct is considered to pose a serious threat to the uptake of testing among the high risk groups of young people and their sex partners and friends. Yet, data are lacking on the mechanisms by which stigma occurs or by which it may influence testing. This qualitative study, conducted among young people who were either tested or never tested, reveals the anticipations and experiences regarding stigma regarding own Ct testing, disclosing testing to others and encouraging others to test. Anticipated stigma appeared present, yet people manage anticipated stigma to avoid negative experiences and still test; they only disclose to their trusted circle of friends and sex partners. Current care strategies that more and more deploy the sexual and social networks of individuals can reach into small networks surrounding a person. These strategies could be improved by exploring methods to reach high risk network members outside the small trusted circle of a young person.

Our findings provide insight in the impact of stigma in current sexually transmitted infections care practice. We consider this in-depth investigation of interest to a wide range of medical professionals, including clinicians, epidemiologists and scientists. It may advance our basic scientific understanding on the different aspects of stigma and its impact on testing and disclosing behavior and, and help STI care professionals to deal with their patients.

All authors have seen and approved the manuscript and contributed significantly to the work. None has declared conflicts of interest. The manuscript has not been previously published, nor is not being considered for publication elsewhere. We hope that you are willing to consider our manuscript for publication in your journal.

Sincerely,

Nicole H.T.M. Dukers-Muijers
PhD Epidemiologist Infectious Diseases
Public Health Service South Limburg, Netherlands
Telephone: +31-45-8506246; +31-6-29193150
Fax: +31-45-5742801; Email: nicole.dukers@ggdzl.nl
Address: GGD Zuid Limburg
Postbus 2022, 6160 HA Geleen
The Netherlands