HIV, Syphilis Risk Quantified in Gay, Bisexual Men

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ATLANTA — New estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that gay and bisexual men are 44 times more likely than other men, and more than 40 times more likely than women, to be diagnosed with HIV infection.

According to data presented at a CDC Conference on STD Prevention, the rate of new HIV diagnoses among men who have had sex with men in the past 5 years is 44-86 times that of other men and 40-77 times that of women.

Rates of primary and secondary syphilis are 46-89 times higher in gay and bisexual men than in other men, with rates of approximately 121 (range, 91-173) per 100,000 versus 2 per 100,000 individuals, respectively. Syphilis rates are 71-135 times higher in gay and bisexual men than in women, who were diagnosed at a rate of 1 per 100,000.

Although the disproportionate burden of HIV and syphilis in gay and bisexual men is already known, the actual disease rates in these men, compared with other populations, have been difficult to determine because there has been no consensus estimate or single data source for the size of the gay and bisexual population in the United States, explained David W. Purcell, Ph.D., of the CDC in his presentation.

Therefore, in order to estimate national disease rates, Dr. Purcell and his colleagues at the CDC first undertook an analysis to determine the size of the U.S. gay and bisexual population.

They found that gay and bisexual men account for about 4.0% (range, 2.8%-5.8%) of U.S. males aged 13 years and older. ■