

***“I was very nervous because I didn’t know how he would take it...”*: GP advice and patient experiences of sharing a chlamydia diagnosis with intimate partners**

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Background:

Partner notification is an essential component of chlamydia management, and individuals diagnosed with a chlamydia infection are advised to notify their sexual partners from the previous six months. Notifying partners of an infection can be challenging especially where a relationship has ended, or transmission may have occurred outside the primary relationship.

Methods:

Semi-structured telephone interviews explored the experiences of general practitioners (GPs) giving partner notification advice and experiences of people with a recent diagnosis of chlamydia in telling intimate partners of the diagnosis.

Results:

24 GPs and 19 people with a recent chlamydia infection participated in an interview. GPs were very aware of the potential impact of a chlamydia infection on their patients. Strategies employed when discussing a chlamydia diagnosis with patients included use of neutral and blame-free language and emphasis on the importance of treatment for the infection. People with a recent chlamydia diagnosis also spoke about the implications of chlamydia on their relationships, particularly those in new or ongoing relationships. In telling partners of the diagnosis, they reported a range of reactions including straightforward, frustrating and emotionally challenging experiences. Both GPs and patients suggested that more support for patients and practitioners to discuss partner notification, including resources to support having the conversation, would be useful.

Conclusion:

A chlamydia infection clearly has impacts on an individual beyond testing and treatment. Conversations with patients should go beyond simply informing them of the need to notify their sexual partners from the previous six months, but also provide information about why partner notification is important and discuss strategies for this. Ensuring GPs have the training and support to engage in these conversations with confidence is vital.

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