

Patient delivered partner therapy for chlamydia: Views of Australian general practitioners

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Background:

Patient delivered partner therapy (PDPT) refers to the process in which antibiotic treatment for chlamydia infection is prescribed or provided to the index case to give to their sexual partner/s. PDPT is effective in expediting partner treatment and reducing reinfections. We investigated the use of and perceptions towards PDPT for chlamydia among general practitioners (GPs) working in Australia.

Methods:

During 2019, we conducted an online survey of 323 GPs and semi-structured telephone interviews with 24 GPs across Australia about their chlamydia management practices, including PDPT. Descriptive statistics were used to examine quantitative data, and thematic analysis applied to qualitative data.

Results:

Over half (53.4%) of survey respondents reported that they never offered PDPT, while 36.6% sometimes did and 10.0% often offered PDPT. A higher proportion of GPs from Australian states with some PDPT guidance reported offering PDPT (52.6%; 95%CI 44.9-60.2) than GPs from states without guidance (36.8%; 95%CI 27.6-46.7). In both the survey and interviews, GPs described potential benefits of PDPT including improved treatment and clinical outcomes, reduced reinfection risk and access to treatment for hard-to-reach people. However, most GPs indicated it was preferable for partners to be consulted directly to allow testing and prevention education as well as treatment. Barriers to PDPT included concern about allergies and medication interactions, potential medicolegal implications in treating a person they had not seen, and that PDPT is unsuitable for some patients and their partners. Many GPs were uncertain about the practicalities of PDPT and indicated a need for professional and regulatory guidance that PDPT is permissible as well as clinician, patient and partner resources to support its use.

Conclusion:

Despite the acknowledged benefits of PDPT, further work from professional and regulatory bodies is needed to support GPs to feel confident to include PDPT as an option for partner management.

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