

**Patient consent for publication** Not required.  
**Provenance and peer review** Not commissioned;  
 internally peer reviewed.



## OPEN ACCESS

**Open access** This is an open access article distributed in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial (CC BY-NC 4.0) license, which permits others to distribute, remix, adapt, build upon this work non-commercially, and license their derivative works on different terms, provided the original work is properly cited, appropriate credit is given, any changes made indicated, and the use is non-commercial. See: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) 2021. Re-use permitted under CC BY-NC. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ.



**To cite** Patani H, Sukhija-Cohen A, Klausner JD, *et al.* *Sex Transm Infect* Epub ahead of print: [please include Day Month Year]. doi:10.1136/sextrans-2021-055149

Received 14 May 2021  
 Accepted 27 June 2021

*Sex Transm Infect* 2021;**0**:1.  
 doi:10.1136/sextrans-2021-055149

### ORCID iD

Henna Patani <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1101-9308>

### REFERENCES

- California Department of Public Health. California sees an increase in rare, severe complications from untreated gonorrhoea (CDPH website). Available: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR20-306.aspx>
- Sukhija-Cohen AC, Beymer MR, Engeran-Cordova W, *et al.* From control to crisis: the resurgence of sexually transmitted diseases. *Sex Transm Dis* 2019;46:e8–10.
- California Department of Public Health. Dear colleague (CDPH website). Available: [https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/publications/misc/Dear\\_Colleague\\_Letter\\_for\\_Medical\\_Providers\\_Increasing\\_DGI\\_in\\_CA\\_12-23-20.pdf](https://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/publications/misc/Dear_Colleague_Letter_for_Medical_Providers_Increasing_DGI_in_CA_12-23-20.pdf)
- California Department of Public Health. CDPH information: increasing disseminated gonococcal infections in California – resources including a webinar on 2/23/21 (Los Angeles County public health website). Available: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/lahan/alerts/CDPHDGI022221.pdf>

# Disseminated gonococcal infection: a potential marker of failing sexually transmitted infection control and prevention services

Henna Patani <sup>1</sup>, Adam Sukhija-Cohen,<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey D Klausner,<sup>2</sup> Whitney Engeran,<sup>1</sup> Michael Weinstein<sup>1</sup>

The SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic has affected routine STI testing leading to undiagnosed and untreated infections,<sup>1</sup> a new obstacle among a series of issues related to STI control in the USA.<sup>2</sup> In November 2020, the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) cited reports of disseminated gonococcal infection (DGI) as a result of "... people not seeking care or getting routine testing during the COVID-19 pandemic".<sup>1</sup>

AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF)—a non-profit organisation providing free walk-in STI services—conducted a retrospective cohort review of all patients who tested gonorrhoea positive at its four California clinics in Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland in October 2020. As per CDPH recommendations for monitoring DGI, positive gonorrhoea cases were checked for reported symptoms at the time of their gonorrhoea test visit including fever, joint pain, swelling of joints, or skin lesions.<sup>3</sup>

Among 214 patients who tested gonorrhoea positive (196 (92%) male; 118 (55%) aged 25–34 years), 28 (13%)

were identified as potential DGI cases based on symptoms documented in the medical record or failure to return for follow-up treatment. Of the 28, four had reported a skin rash and one reported having fever, muscle pain and lower right abdominal pain. All 28 patients were contacted by phone and through AHF's online patient portal for additional information about symptoms 7 days prior to their gonorrhoea test date. No case-patient recalled any symptoms of DGI.

CDPH released another DGI-focused press release February 2021, citing homelessness and/or the use of illicit drugs as risk factors for DGI.<sup>4</sup> Although no cases among AHF patients were found in this retrospective cohort review, continued efforts are needed to ensure vulnerable populations can access gonorrhoea testing and timely treatment services during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Handling editor** Anna Maria Geretti

**Contributors** HP: performed descriptive statistics on the data and drafted the article. ASC: supervised the study, and provided critical revisions to the draft. JDK: provided insights regarding clinical aspects, and feedback on the draft. WE: directed this study and managed resources. MW: provided oversight. All authors reviewed the final manuscript.

**Funding** The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

**Competing interests** None declared.

<sup>1</sup>Public Health Division, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Los Angeles, California, USA

<sup>2</sup>Preventive Medicine, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, USA

**Correspondence to** Henna Patani, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Los Angeles, CA 900028, USA; [henna.patani@ahf.org](mailto:henna.patani@ahf.org)