

Sexually Transmitted Disease/Infection Among American Indian and Alaska Native

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Introduction

- American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) have higher rates of sexually transmitted infections than Whites.
- AI/AN youth and young adults are at increase their risk of sexually transmitted diseases/illness.
- Disparities in health outcomes occur between AI/AN populations and other groups.
- Untreated STDs can lead to chronic pelvic pain, infertility, ectopic pregnancies, fetal deaths, preterm deliveries, cardiac and neurological impairments, and even death.
- Many STDs are asymptomatic, meaning people often do not realize they are infected. As a result, these diseases frequently go undiagnosed and can spread rapidly to others, including unborn children.

Methods & Materials

Literature Review

- PubMed & Google Scholar.
- Research published literature and accessible sources to learn about the sexual health practices of individuals who identify as AI/AN.
- Screening for three sexually transmitted infections was self-administered. Participants collected their own samples in a private setting, then processed by trained American Indian paraprofessionals and analyzed at an external laboratory.



Barriers

- Lack of sexual health education.
- Lack of healthcare services in rural areas.
- Lack of concerns about privacy and confidentiality.
- Perceived stigma from healthcare professionals.
- Lack of family/friend support.
- Lack of healthcare access and medication needed for treatment.

Findings

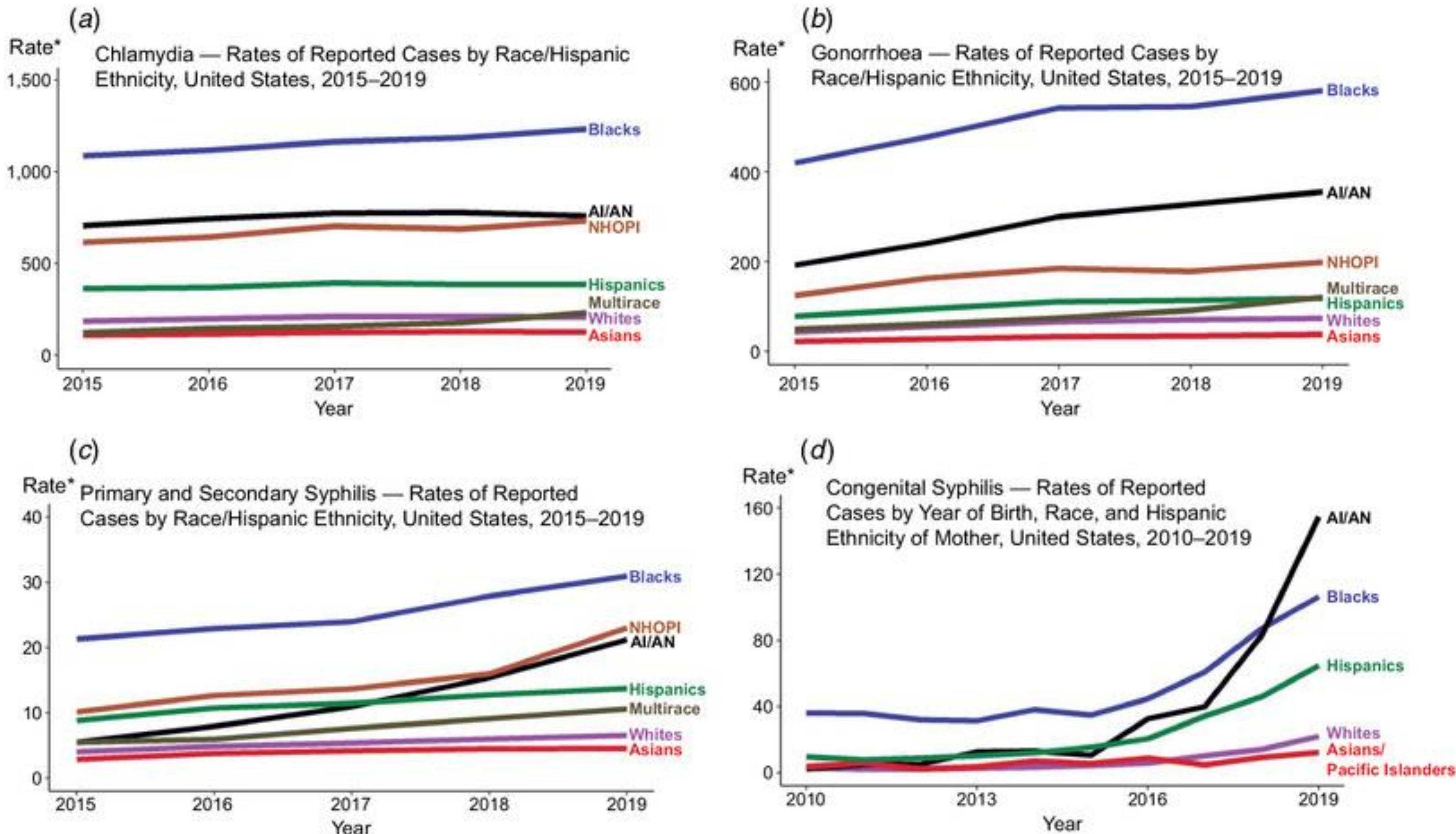


Figure 1: Rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and congenital syphilis by race/ ethnicity.

Discussion

- These interventions would enhance existing sexual health and STI programs by providing educational resources for communities and clinicians, as well as increasing outreach by community-based health workers and practitioners.
- Traditional Indigenous practices and knowledge systems, as well as modern public health services, will contribute to the development of solutions. Indigenous culture is considered to benefit mental, sexual, and physical health.

Recommendation

- Free screening for sexually transmitted disease/illness
- Mobile clinics.
- Culturally relevant sexual health programs for kids, tribal health educators, and adults.
- Innovative community methods to address sexual health using websites.

Results

- To effectively address sexual health and STIs among AI/AN individuals, a balanced approach of individual and community protective factors, accessible clinical services, community-driven public health interventions, and adequate surveillance is necessary to guide programming.
- Enhanced STI outcomes can be attained by consistently applying proven clinical interventions, such as taking a sexual health history, utilizing clinical decision support tools for recommended testing, and promptly starting partner therapy.

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References

