



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS SKYROCKET IN MONROE COUNTY – COORDINATED EFFORT NEEDED TO IMPROVE SEXUAL HEALTH OF COMMUNITY

New HIV diagnoses spike, and cases of gonorrhea increased 77% in 2020

ROCHESTER, NY (March 25, 2021) – A new report from ACT Rochester and Trillium Health reveals that Monroe County is seeing some of the highest increases in STI rates in New York State. The report, authored by William Valenti, MD, Co-Founder, Chief of Innovation and Staff Physician at Trillium Health, and funded by the LGBT+ Giving Circle of Rochester Area Community Foundation, urges health professionals to adopt a new comprehensive approach to sexual health and STIs, particularly in primary care settings, and encourages the public to take proactive steps toward living healthy, sex-positive lives.

Key findings of the report, “Sexual Health in Rochester/Monroe County”:

- In the first nine months of 2020, Monroe County recorded 55 new HIV diagnoses – as many as in each of the previous four years.
- Gonorrhea cases increased 77% in 2020 compared to 2019
- In 2018, Monroe County had 5,382 cases of chlamydia and 1,888 cases of gonorrhea – among the highest rates in the state outside of New York City
- Many cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia go undiagnosed and unreported
- 55% of STIs diagnosed were among people younger than age 26
- Non-Hispanic Black individuals, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men are at the highest risk for STIs
- Increased screening, changing transmission patterns, and decreased condom use account for some of the reported increases

Key recommendations include:

- Providers should ask every patient detailed questions about their sexual history and drug use as a way to inform screening, treatment, prevention, and education as part of a health care plan
- Screen for STIs and HIV in all sexually active people, and test at the anatomic sites of exposure (throat, rectum, genitals)

- Offer pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV
- Individuals should learn and practice safe sex techniques to reduce risk of exposure to STIs

The report finds that educating the public is also key, as many people tend to underestimate – or even deny – their risk for STIs in general and HIV specifically. The concepts of infection transmission are not well understood by many, which could lead to a disconnect in perceived vs. real risk for STIs and HIV.

William Valenti, MD, Co-Founder, Chief of Innovation and Staff Physician at Trillium Health says:

“This report is designed to highlight the importance of sexual health at the individual and community levels. Starting with the sexual history, the report offers solutions that drive testing, treatment and health education.”

Ann M. Johnson, Executive Director, ACT Rochester, says:

“We don’t discuss sex because it is considered by some to be an uncomfortable and taboo subject. But we must start talking about it so we can address the continuing rise of sexually transmitted infections in our community. This report drives home the need for individuals to be more open with health care providers and partners and focus on how to stay healthy.”

The release of this report from ACT Rochester and Trillium Health comes one day after a report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), which also warns of the severe health consequences that can result from untreated STIs. According to the NASEM Report, “Sexually Transmitted Infections: Adopting a Sexual Health Paradigm,” 1 in 5 people in the United States will have an STI in a given year, with nearly 68 million infections in 2018.

Dr. Valenti and Ann Johnson are available for media interviews upon request.

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About ACT Rochester

Launched in 2009, ACT Rochester's purpose is to change the culture of community problem-solving and associated decision-making through the use of credible, independent and timely data. This is accomplished when people LEARN about key issues, CONNECT with others in the community, and ACT to promote change.

Currently a community indicators program of Rochester Area Community Foundation, ACT Rochester provides an objective assessment of the nine-county region's performance on key indicators of well-being. The website, a robust public utility at www.ACTRochester.org, creates a "one-stop shop" for data and analysis, with more than 100 indicators as well as links to more than 300 community initiatives and resources.

About Trillium Health

As a Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alike, Trillium Health's mission is to promote health equity by providing affordable and extraordinary primary and specialty health care to all, including LGBTQ+ communities, in Rochester, New York. Its comprehensive model of care ensures care for people from all backgrounds, regardless of income, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, or ethnicity. Trillium Health remains designated as the western NY Ryan White provider and we continue to expand our HIV prevention and treatment services to low-income individuals living with or at risk for HIV. Ryan White providers' innovative care approach for people living with HIV/AIDS results in viral load suppression, minimizing the risk of HIV transmission. For more information, please visit <https://www.trilliumhealth.org/>.

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