Quick Tips to Implement Universal Screening (for CT/NG)

Key Conversation Topics

The following sample language is helpful during exams when discussing sensitive topics with patients, such as chlamydia (CT) and gonorrhea (NG) screening.

- "We automatically screen *all* female patients ages 15-24 for chlamydia and gonorrhea every year, regardless of their sexual history. Getting screened is an important part of staying healthy."
- "Chlamydia and gonorrhea are common infections that usually have no symptoms, so you could be infected even if you don't have symptoms."
- "STI testing is easy. We can test a urine sample or self-collected vaginal swab."
- "Chlamydia and gonorrhea can cause lifelong problems like infertility if they aren't detected and treated. Luckily, they can be treated easily with antibiotics if they are detected early."
- "We will contact you privately if any tests are positive and provide medicine for you and any sexual partners."

Patient Confidentiality

There are several opportunities to help patients and their parents feel comfortable during their exams. These tactics may also increase the use of recommended services among adolescents.[1]

- **Provide a letter** to parents about the importance of confidentiality during their children's exams and the Universal Screening policy, while assuring them that discussions are age appropriate.
- **Make an office policy** that staff will not discuss or release sensitive health information to parents without the patient's permission.
- **Encourage patients to communicate** openly about sensitive topics like sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and more with their parents.
- **Limit the number of individuals** who speak with the patient about sensitive topics; namely, healthcare providers (HCP), registered nurses and nurse's assistants.
- **Ask for a personal contact number or email** to alert teenagers of test results and other private information following their visits.
- **Restrict or modify parental access** to a patient's confidential information through EHR/EMR online portals if state laws allow.
- **As a last resort**, if teens are still concerned about confidentiality, recommend Title X-funded free clinics, which do not send explanation of benefits to avoid risking breach of confidentiality.

Proper Sample Handling

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While collecting a sample from a patient for STI or any other testing, remember:

- If collecting first-catch urine samples, make sure patients last urinated at least 2 hours ago.
- Ask patients who have urinated recently to use self-collected vaginal swabs to provide samples.
- Immediately refrigerate all samples.
- Ask for private contact numbers where you can reach patients to deliver results.

- If you are unable to gather a sample before the patient sees the HCP, tell the HCP so he or she may collect a sample during the exam, if necessary.

Set Up Reminders in the EMR

Make the most of existing electronic medical record (EMR) systems in your practice. You can program built-in reminders and flags that remind employees of best practices and quality care reminders for age-based CT/NG screening.

Communicating Results

Create and follow a standardized protocol to deliver CT/NG screening results to patients. Specify:

- How and when your team will ask patients during their exams for private contact information.
- Which types of tests and results (e.g., normal, abnormal, positive, negative) are delivered in which way.
- Which members of your practice are responsible for delivering results.
- A time frame in which results must be delivered to patients.
- How patients with positive results will receive their prescriptions or in-office treatment.

Once you've established these best practices internally, communicate with your patients, so they know what to expect.

When delivering positive results, it's important to treat young adult patients with respect. Be prepared to explain treatment options, answer questions and schedule follow-up appointments with patients during this call.

Retesting After 3 Months

Several studies support the efficacy of patient reminders to improve retesting rates.[2] The CDC recommends retesting patients who test positive for CT/NG 3 months after treatment.[3] You can set up follow-up appointment reminders using your EMR system or other scheduling system and alert patients via text message, email or phone call.

References: 1. CDC. Confidentiality Issues and Use of Sexually Transmitted Disease Services Among Sexually Experienced Persons Aged 15-25 Years — United States, 2013–2015. *MMWR Weekly.* 2017;66(9):237-241. **2.** California Department of Public Health. Best Practices and Early Detection of Repeat Chlamydial and Gonococcal Infections: Effective Partner Treatment and Patient Retesting Strategies for Implementation in California Health Care Settings. https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Best_Practices_for_Preventing_RepeatCT_Inf.pdf. Revised February 2016. Accessed August 4, 2018. **3.** CDC. Screening Recommendations and Considerations Referenced in Treatment Guidelines and Original Sources. https://www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/screening-recommendations.htm. Updated August 22, 2016. Accessed September 4, 2018.