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World Health Organisation (WHO)

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

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**International
Community**

**Memorable
Experience**

**Challenges
Skills**



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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Athanasios Stratogiannis, I attend the Leonteios School of Athens and I have the profound honour to serve as a Student Officer at the 6th Campion School Model United Nations. First of all, I would like to welcome you all to the World Health Organisation (WHO) where I will be serving as your Deputy President and expert chair on the topic of Preventing the Spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases. I look forward to working with all of you and I hope that during the conference we will have a productive and fruitful debate. The aim of this study guide is to give you a basic knowledge on the topic in order to help you on what to research, so that you can draft good resolutions and further understand your country's policy on the matter. I suggest that you carefully study this document and if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me so I can provide you with further explanations and assistance on the topic. (e-mail: thanostratogiannis@gmail.com)

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) have been a major world issue for a very long time. STDs are diseases that can only be transmitted through sexual intercourse. There are many different kinds of STDs and each one of them can have different effects on someone. Many countries around the world have major STD problems and each year, thousands of people die from them. Some of these are very difficult to be cured and others such as the HIV can change a person's life forever. This is all happening because people are not well educated on the many ways of preventing the transmission of these diseases and some do not know how much they are risking themselves getting infected when not using prevention methods during sexual intercourse. We, as the World Health Organisation are called upon in order to come up with solutions for this issue which will not only provide successful measures in order to promote ways of prevention but also measures that will ensure that in the future, people will have knowledge on how to protect themselves for getting infected. That being said, I wish you all best of luck and I look forward for an amazing conference!

Best regards,

Athanasios Stratogiannis



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WHO: *Preventing the Spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases*



INTRODUCTION

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), also known as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), are infections, which are mostly passed from one person to another while having sexual intercourse. However, STDs can also spread from mother to baby during birth, through the use and share of unsterilized needles between groups of people, through blood transfusions and even through breast-feeding. STDs are mostly spread through sexual intercourse because to the warm and moist environments in the genital areas of both men and women provide excellent conditions for the growth of more than 30 kinds of parasites, viruses and bacteria. Even if there is a high number of bacteria, only eight of these can cause the most serious STD cases. Today, syphilis gonorrhoea, chlamydia, and trichomoniasis are the only sexually transmitted diseases that can be cured and viral diseases such as hepatitis B, herpes, HIV, and human papillomavirus, which cannot be cured, are controlled through various treatments that reduce and modify their symptoms.

Control Failure

STDs are very common nowadays and people have been dealing with them for centuries. Every day, more than 1 million STDs are transmitted around the world. This phenomenon is so common due to the failing control of STDs in each country, because STDs are not only medical problems, but they also have consequences on someone's behavior and also on the economic and political state of a society. To begin with, governments do not give the emphasis needed on educational efforts for prevention and the currently existing treatment strategies focus primarily on unrealistic requirements when their main goal should be practical decision making. To continue, the antibiotics and medicine used in treatments are very ineffective since, for economic reasons, governments buy cheap medicine. Also, control methods have been mostly focused on men, who are more symptomatic rather than women, which are asymptomatic patients. While conducting policy-making and planning, governments tend to not prioritize this issue due to discriminations against infected persons and their own failure to recognize the problem in their countries.



Prevention

STD prevention programs should have 3 main goals: to interfere with the transmission of sexually procured diseases, to halt the further development and proliferation of these particular diseases and to reduce the risk of more people getting infected with HIV, since there is a close relationship between AIDS and STDs. When creating new prevention strategies, countries should not only consider the biological side of STDs, but also many other aspects such as the part of human physiology, and sociocultural impacts on a person. Even if some factors aim beyond the solution of this problem, in order to create successful and efficient strategies, countries must consider things such as employment, age, gender, religion and culture of a person, since they play a big part in someone's decision making ability.

Primary Prevention

The basic aim of primary prevention is to reduce and prevent the obtaining of contaminations and infections. In other words, primary prevention programmes focus mostly on actions taken before someone is infected. These involve the promotion of a safe sexual life and the use of barrier methods such as condoms during sexual intercourse. Also, sexual education programmes such as a variety of classes in schools and conferences can also be perceived as parts of primary prevention. These activities are the ones that can have positive effect on the incurable types of STDs. To continue with, educational programmes should inform the citizens on some of the many characteristics of STD cases. These should include information such as the fact that most STDs can be cured, the basic recognizable symptoms of each STD, which are the areas where people can get more informed on this issue and where can they be treated.

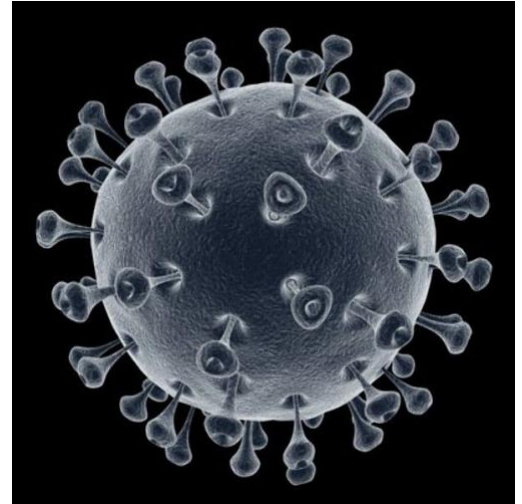
Secondary Prevention

Secondary prevention consists of the measures that will be taken, after a person has been infected. Secondary prevention strategies include the promotion of help-seeking when someone gets infected and also the creation or promotion of safe and effective medical clinics where treatment programmes are being held.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

- **Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS)**

HIV, also known as Human Immunodeficiency Virus is the virus, that if not treated properly, can lead to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or AIDS. HIV is one of the viral diseases that cannot be cured, so if someone gets infected they have the disease for the rest of their life. When someone gets infected with HIV, their immune system is directly attacked by the virus, due to the fact that it has a direct impact on the CD4 cells that help the organism fight off diseases. As time passes, more and more of cells are destroyed and then, the human body reaches a point where it has lost any ability to combat infections and diseases. Therefore, these people are very prone to being infected by various diseases and cancers which take control over the infected person's weakened immune system and signal the organism that the HIV has come to its last stage of infection, and that the person has AIDS.



As stated before, HIV is an infection that cannot be cured, simply due to the fact that no treatment has been proven to be 100% effective. However, the symptoms of HIV can be reduced and controlled through a special type of treatment called antiretroviral therapy or ART. This medicine, if taken correctly, it can extend the lives of infected people by a lot, keep them at their best health and actually reduce the chances of them infecting others. ART is the reason why many people continue to live and fight this virus for many years. Before the creation of ART, HIV could progress to AIDS very quickly and infected people would die a few years after the acquisition of the virus. Nowadays, a person who is diagnosed and treated at the right time, can actually, live as many years as someone who does have the disease.

- **Syphilis**

Syphilis is the STD that is caused by *Treponema Pallidum* which is a bacterium transmitted through sexual intercourse and that can cause very serious health issues. Syphilis is very common and almost anyone who is sexually active and has unprotected sex can get infected. This disease can be found at a total of 4 stages. The first stage is primary syphilis, where the patient has sores, which are soft, painless and round areas located mostly around the genital areas. Secondary syphilis consists of skin rashes and fevers, and, both the symptoms of primary and secondary syphilis are mild and sometimes they remain unnoticed. The latent stage is the stage where the person infected shows no symptoms or any at all signs that he has the disease.

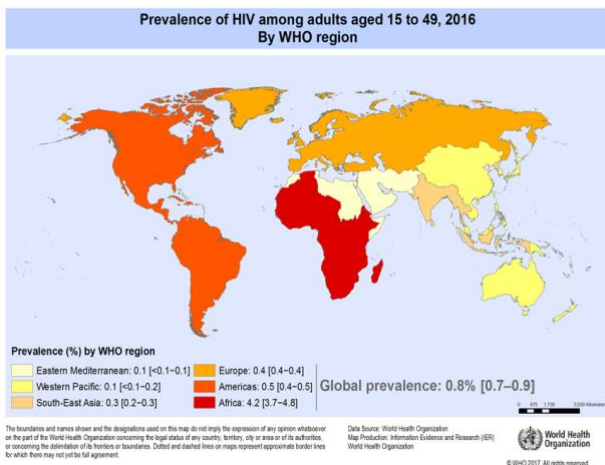
The most dangerous stage of syphilis is the stage of tertiary syphilis, can actually result into serious health issues because it can affect the brain, the heart and other organs of the body. Syphilis is also very dangerous, because it can be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, but it can be cured with use of correct medication.

Top 5 European Countries per STD				
Average Rate per 100,000 Residents from 2000 - 2013				
Chlamydia		Rate	HPV	Rate
1.	Iceland	618.82	1. United Kingdom	131.65
2.	Norway	424.42	2. Ireland	72.90
3.	Denmark	371.42	3. Iceland	38.24
4.	Sweden	361.56	4. Russian Federation	28.86
5.	United Kingdom	281.07	5. Belarus	27.02
Hepatitis B		Rate	Hepatitis C*	Rate
1.	Iceland	13.08	1. Iceland	22.75
2.	Latvia	11.71	2. Sweden	21.97
3.	Russian Federation	10.53	3. Finland	20.23
4.	Ukraine	10.46	4. Ireland	14.54
5.	Bulgaria	10.21	5. United Kingdom	10.77
Herpes		Rate	Gonorrhea	Rate
1.	Republic of Moldova	67.21	1. Russian Federation	68.47
2.	United Kingdom	35.80	2. Belarus	56.42
3.	Estonia	21.06	3. Republic of Moldova	44.85
4.	Russian Federation	18.52	4. Ukraine	35.80
5.	Belarus	17.96	5. United Kingdom	34.60
Syphilis		Rate	HIV	Rate
1.	Republic of Moldova	78.46	1. Estonia	45.25
2.	Russian Federation	74.29	2. Russian Federation	33.61
3.	Bulgaria	46.79	3. Ukraine	27.05
4.	Ukraine	44.69	4. Portugal	17.35
5.	Monaco	41.11	5. Latvia	17.34

*Hepatitis C average rate per 100,000 residents, 2000 - 2012

- **Gonorrhea**

Gonorrhea is the STD that is caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. It also a very common yet serious disease, whose symptoms start to show 14 days after someone has been infected. Signs and symptoms can also be different from man to woman and there are cases when someone who is infected with this disease shows no symptoms at all. Men can show symptoms such as a burning sensation during urination and a white, yellow or green discharge from their genital areas. Women usually show mild symptoms, which are often mistaken for other diseases and even if they do not show symptoms, women can develop serious health issues occurring from the infection. Women show symptoms such as a painful sensation during urination and increased vaginal discharge. Gonorrhea can be cured when the correct medications and antibiotics are taken though, any damage that it has already caused cannot be undone. However, nowadays treating gonorrhea is becoming harder due to the fact that drug-resistant strains of the disease have been found and their population is quickly increasing.





- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**

Human papillomavirus also known as HPV for short, is not actually a disease, but a large group of more than 150 viruses. Each of the viruses is numbered according to the type of HPV it has. HPV can also lead to certain types of cancers. This infection is called HPV, due to the many papillomas (warts) it can cause. These genital warts usually are small bumps or groups of bumps located around the genital area. HPV is mostly transmitted through skin contact during sexual intercourse. Even if it is one of the non-curable STDs, HPV is so common, that it is estimated that nearly all women and men will get it at some point in their lives. Also, it is not sure that someone will develop symptoms that indicate that he/she has the disease because there are cases where a person has developed these symptoms years after they were infected.



HISTORICAL INFORMATION

AIDS

HIV is believed to have come from the area of Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, when, in 1920, it crossed species and was transferred from chimpanzees to humans. This happened when, while people were hunting these animals, they came in contact with the blood of some that were infected. Before the 1980s where the epidemic of the disease first started, it is not known how many people were infected with HIV or advanced AIDs, but it is estimated that in this period, about 300,000 people could have been infected around the world.

Everything changed when, in 1981, cases were reported of a rare and extremely aggressive lung infection, *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, that was found in 5 young, gay men who previously were at their best health. By the end of the same year, there were about 270 cases of severe immune deficiency in gay men in which 121 of them had died. The following year, more cases of immune deficiency had been found in gay men in Southern California, a fact that supported the idea the cause of the deficiency was the sexual orientation of someone and thus it was initially named gay-related immune deficiency as known as GRID. Though everything changed when in 1983 immune deficiency occurred to women who had male partners and the disease was renamed as Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome by the Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describing it as “a disease at least moderately predictive of a defect in cell mediated immunity, occurring in a person with no known case for diminished resistance to that disease”. Up until today, a cure for AIDS has not been found yet and scientists are working every day in order to find one and for the time being infected people are prescribed with antibiotics in order to limit the symptoms of the diseases and to slow down its transition from HIV to AIDS.

Syphilis

Syphilis has a very complex history. The origin of this disease still remains unknown to mankind. There are two theories on what caused the outbreak of this disease. The first one is that the men who travelled alongside Christopher Columbus, got infected while they were in America, and that they brought the disease when they came back to Europe. The other theory suggests that the disease already existed in Europe and that there were many cases of syphilis, but people did not identify it as a disease but as a part of the leprosy pandemic.



The first ever outbreak of syphilis happened in Europe, in 1495 in Naples, and from that moment, the disease spread all across Europe causing people symptoms such as fevers, rashes and muscle pains. The sores caused by the disease would affect the bones and destroy many parts of the body such as the eyes, the nose and the lips. In almost all of the cases of syphilis though, the person that was infected died. 5 years after the initial outbreak, the disease had spread all through Europe but also in the Scandinavian countries, Britain, Greece and it even had spread to Russia and Poland. This led to countries blaming each other for the start of syphilis. Due to the social conditions at the time, in which the church had a big influence on people, those who were infected, were believed to be punished for their sins and they were banned from society.



TIMELINE

Date	Description of Event
1981	Centers for Disease Control and Preventions (CDC) publish a <i>Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report</i> (MMWR), describing cases of a rare lung infection among gay people. This is the beginning of what is known as AIDS epidemic
1987	In February, the World Health Organization (WHO) launches <i>The Global Program on AIDS</i> to: raise awareness, formulate evidence-based policies, provide technical and financial support to countries, initiate relevant social, behavioral, and biomedical research, promote participation by nongovernmental organizations, and champion the rights of those living with HIV.
1994	HIV is recognised as an important challenge at the International Conference on Population and Development
1995-2008	During this period of time the estimated annual incidence of non-HIV STIs has increased by nearly 50%



POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In spite of the difficulties in the field, progress has been made in medicine and methods have been developed that can halt the spread of STDs. However, it is not only medicine that can have an enormous impact in the lives of those suffering and in those who need to be protected. Some possible solutions that should be considered during the formation of your final resolution are:

- ✓ **Better Sexual Education**
- ✓ **STD programs held by countries**
- ✓ **Contraception/ Use of Barrier Methods during intercourse**
- ✓ **Vaccinations**
- ✓ **Screening**
- ✓ **Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP):**
 - Is a short-term antiretroviral treatment to reduce the likelihood of HIV infection after potential exposure, either occupationally or through sexual intercourse.
- ✓ **Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV:**
 - Due to the fact that the virus can be transmitted in breast milk baby formula is advised
 - If a woman takes HIV medicines during pregnancy and childbirth and her baby receives HIV medicines for 4 to 6 weeks after birth, the risk of transmitting HIV can be lowered to 2% or less.



MAJOR COUNTRIES & ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

Between 2014 and 2015 rates of sexually transmitted diseases raised to the country's highest point. Reported cases of primary and secondary syphilis rose by 19%, gonorrhea cases rose by 12.8%, and chlamydia cases rose by 5.9%, from 2014. All three STDs are curable with antibiotics, but most infections go undiagnosed and untreated, according to the CDC. The problem occurs mostly among the ages of 15 to 24 and gays or bisexuals.

China

The main targets of the virus HIV and other STDs in China are female sex workers (FSWs) and their clients, men who have sex with men (MSM), drug users and migrant workers. This kind of infections are recognized as major health problems in China. What is more, although some progress had been made with Syphilis in the 60s with programmes for free screening and treatments, the virus is again spreading not only to the high-risk population but also the common¹.

African countries

Sexually transmitted diseases are a major public health problem in most African countries on account of their frequency, their associated morbidity and mortality, their impact on maternal and infant health, as well as their economic costs in terms of health expenditure and lost productivity, and, last but not least, because of their social consequences. AIDS may, in fact, be the leading cause of death in some cities, and is thought to be spreading to rural areas through a highly mobile work force, multiple partners, and high rates of sexually transmitted diseases. In South Africa in 2016, 7.1 million people lived with HIV, 56% of adults were on antiretroviral treatment as well as 55% of children. In other words, South Africa has the biggest HIV epidemic in the world.

Europe is considered an active force in addressing issues related to trafficking. During the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings and through the Organization of the Special Representatives for Combating the Traffic of Human Beings², Europe is held accountable for protecting the

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3203037/>

² *Council of Europe*, Council of Europe, www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/about-the-convention.



victim's rights, blocking trafficking, monitoring, raising public awareness, forming the political will to end trafficking, and supporting policies against corruption and organized crime. The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings entered into force on 1 February 2008, proceeding its 10th ratification. The Convention both builds on existing international instruments and goes beyond the minimum standards agreed upon in them as well as strengthens the protection spared to victims. The Convention has a comprehensive scope of application, encompassing all forms of trafficking (national or transnational, linked or not linked to organized crime) and taking all victims of trafficking (despite age and gender). The forms of exploitation which are covered by the Convention include, at a minimum, sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery and its similar practices, servitude and the removal of organs. The principal added value of the Convention is its human rights perspective and focus on victim protection.



UN INVOLVEMENT: Relevant Resolutions & Treaties

Sexual health, human rights and the law (WHO)

“This report demonstrates the relationship between sexual health, human rights and the law. Drawing from a review of public health evidence and extensive research into human rights law at international, regional and national levels, the report shows how states in different parts of the world can and do support sexual health through legal and other mechanisms that are consistent with human rights standards and their own human rights obligations.”

United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS):

“It places people living with HIV and people affected by the virus at the decision-making table and at the centre of designing, delivering and monitoring the AIDS response. It charts paths for countries and communities to get on the Fast-Track to ending AIDS and is a bold advocate for addressing the legal and policy barriers to the AIDS response.”

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC):

“The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) was established in 2005. It is an EU agency aimed at strengthening Europe's defences against infectious diseases. ECDC works in three key strategic areas: it provides evidence for effective and efficient decision-making, it strengthens public health systems, and it supports the response to public health threats.”

Global Fund to Fight AIDS:

“The Global Fund is a 21st-century partnership organization designed to accelerate the end of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria as epidemics.”



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