

Evidence-based steps for increasing chlamydia screening at your practice

Despite national guidelines recommending annual chlamydia screening for sexually active young women, screening rates remain low nationally and in North Carolina. For Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) female members ages 16 to 26, the 2007 HEDIS chlamydia screening rate was 31%. This is far lower than rates for all other BCBSNC women's health services measured by HEDIS, including Pap smears (79%).

**FDA-approved
chlamydia screening tests
are a covered benefit for
BCBSNC members.¹**

¹Applicable co-payments, coinsurance or deductible may apply.

To support practices in efforts to increase chlamydia screening, BCBSNC staff helped facilitate Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) meetings at three large OB/GYN practices in late 2004. The program evaluation found that taking the following key steps increased the average chlamydia screening rate by 138% one year after the CQI meetings. After the program, the average chlamydia screening rate among these practices was 53%, compared to an average screening rate of 22% among three comparison practices.

Key steps for increasing chlamydia screening at your practice

1. Conduct an initial chart audit to assess your practice's screening rate. Pull 10 charts from recent visits among women ages 16-24 and determine the number of women who were screened. BCBSNC can also provide screening rates to practices using claims data.
2. Disseminate national guidelines (enclosed) for chlamydia screening and treatment to physicians, mid-level practitioners, and nurses. Screening is recommended for all sexually active women ages 24 and younger (US Preventive Services Task Force).
3. Select a physician champion who will raise this issue at a staff meeting and discuss ways to overcome barriers to chlamydia screening. Facilitate a discussion on how to make chlamydia screening part of the routine work flow at your practice. Set a target for chlamydia screening at your practice.
4. Develop a policy for routine chlamydia screening at your practice. Communicate the policy to all providers.
5. Tell doctors, mid-level practitioners, nurses, and staff that chlamydia screening is a covered benefit for most members with commercial insurance or Medicaid.
6. Place chlamydia specimen collection materials next to Pap test collection kits in exam rooms. Recommend chlamydia screening to all young women during routine Pap smears.
7. Make copies of free chlamydia education materials that can be given to patients (see reverse of this page for resources).
8. Conduct a chart review 6-8 weeks after making the above changes to assess progress. Keep making improvements until your practice reaches the goal.

For more information about this program or to request assistance with increasing chlamydia screening at your practice, please contact us at quality@bcbsnc.com or 1-800-218-5295.

Resources

CDC chlamydia patient handout in English and Spanish.
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/chlamydia/STDFact-Chlamydia.htm>

CDC resources for providers to address chlamydia screening. Includes free software you can download to evaluate and optimize resource allocation for chlamydia screening.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/dstd/HEDIS.htm>

Chlamydia Care Quality Improvement Toolbox has a two-page patient education fact sheet in English and Spanish. Developed by the California Chlamydia Action Coalition.
<http://www.ucsf.edu/castd/toolbox/>

Additional copies of CDC Guidelines for Chlamydia Screening and Treatment and Guide to Sexual History Taking are available free of charge from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina by calling 1-800-218-5295 or by email at partnerships@bcbsnc.com