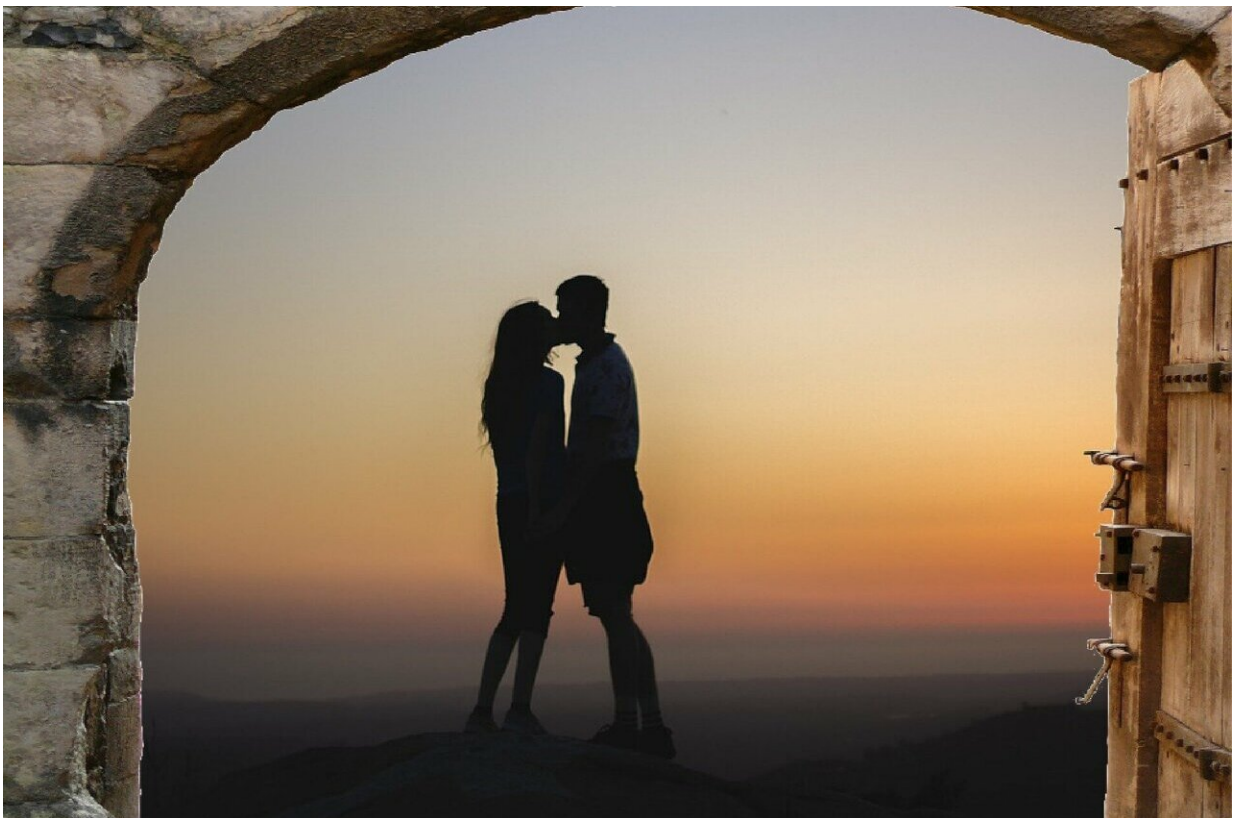


Study shows high acceptance of proactively treating partners of people diagnosed with chlamydia

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Chlamydia rates have been steadily increasing over the last 20 years, with women experiencing the highest burden of the infection. Expedited

partner therapy (EPT) for chlamydia—proactively treating partners of people diagnosed with the infection—can be an important public health tool for stopping transmission of the infection. The approach is important especially for female sex partners of reproductive age because untreated and repeated chlamydia infections increase a woman's risk for reduced fertility. A new University of Minnesota School of Public Health (SPH) study found women have low knowledge of EPT, but after learning more, overwhelmingly support the idea.

The study, led by former undergraduate student and recent graduate student Ashley Oglesby (MPH '19) and her mentor-advisor Associate Professor Ruby Nguyen, was published in the journal *Sexual Health*.

"EPT has been proven an effective strategy for treating partners unable or unwilling to seek care but use remains low," said Oglesby. "This relatively unknown approach has a lot of potential and could be very effective in places, such as college campuses, where infections are often found. Yet, I'd never heard of EPT until I was in my graduate school class with Dr. Nguyen. So, I wondered how much other people know about and use EPT."

EPT is the practice of giving patients diagnosed with [chlamydia](#) or gonorrhea extra medication or prescriptions to give to their partner to presumptively treat their infection.

"People with sexually transmitted infections may be embarrassed and scared to seek treatment. EPT could be a smart approach because it eliminates the need for partners to make an appointment and be tested when it's likely they have the infection," said Oglesby.

For the study, Oglesby surveyed 871 women aged 18-40 years old who visited the University's Driven to Discover Research Facility during the 2018 Minnesota State Fair. The women were asked about their

knowledge of sexually transmitted infections, EPT, and using a hypothetical example, if they would accept EPT use.

The study found:

- Only 12% of women reported having heard of EPT prior to the survey.
- After learning more about EPT, 88% of survey-takers supported EPT and the belief that it could reduce chlamydia rates.
- Healthcare workers were the only group to show significant knowledge of EPT.

"Despite overwhelming support for EPT, our results indicate that prior knowledge of the treatment is low among women outside of the healthcare field," said Oglesby. "Sex health educators can improve this by providing information on the options for treatment to reduce the stigma about infections and fear some people have for testing and treatment."

Oglesby said it's also important to educate providers on the benefits and safety of EPT and address any reasons they may have for being reluctant to prescribe it, such as worries about poor treatment plan adherence. Oglesby thinks the study results can give providers some peace of mind by showing potential patients have high interest in using EPT.

More information: Ashley Oglesby et al, Women's knowledge and hypothetical acceptance of expedited partner therapy for chlamydia, *Sexual Health* (2021). [DOI: 10.1071/SH21157](https://doi.org/10.1071/SH21157)

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