



Opinions on and experiences with STI POCTs among U.S. Community Health Center Practitioners treating STI clients



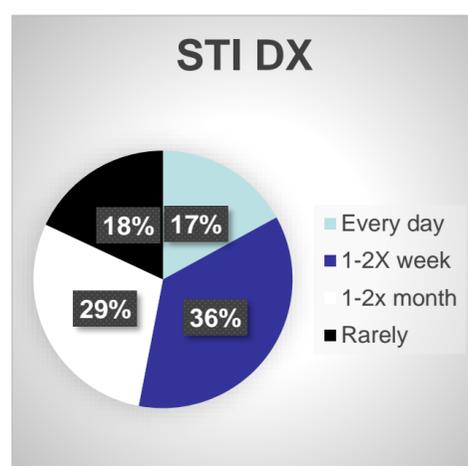
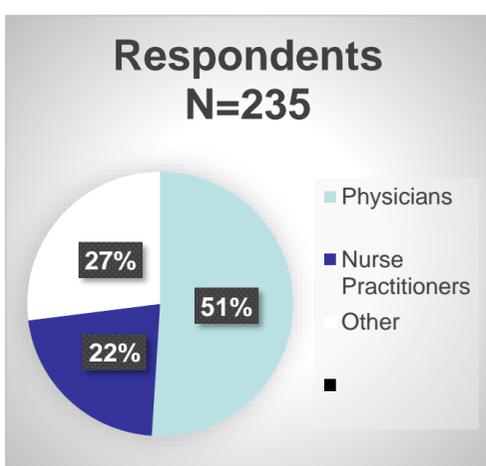
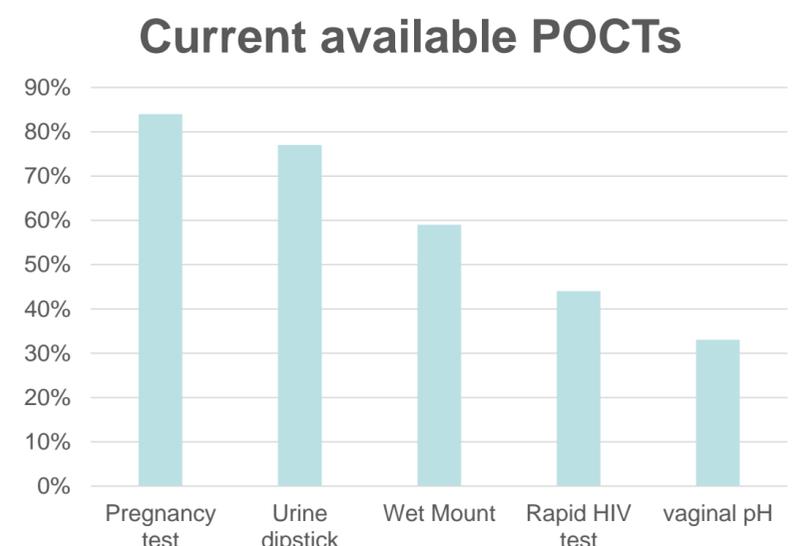
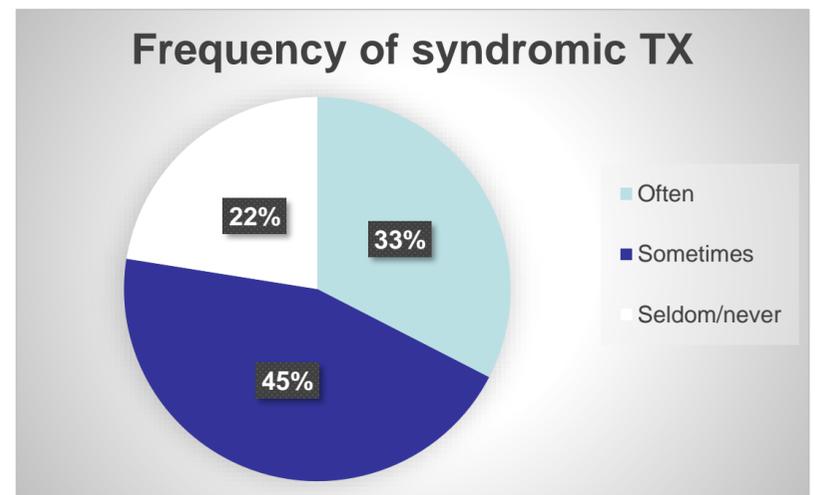
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Background: Sexually transmitted infection (STI) diagnoses in the U.S. has shifted primarily from STI clinics to private providers or community health centers over the past few decades. Strict CLIA regulations limit clinician-performed on-site lab tests. However, some point-of-care tests (POCTs) for STIs and HIV are on the market. The National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) and the Johns Hopkins Center for POCTs for STIs invited targeted NACHC members to complete a Qualtrics survey to determine opinions about and experiences with POCTs for STIs.

Methods: One time invitations to participate in a Qualtrics survey were emailed to 5,710 NACHC members who were likely to see clients with STIs. 347 consented to participate and 235 completed the survey.

Results: Of 235 respondents: 51% were physicians and 22% were nurse practitioners; 57% were in practice for > 10 years; 76% worked mainly in urban settings. 56% reported routinely taking a sexual history while 17% did so based on symptoms. Frequency of STD diagnoses was: 17% every day; 36% once or twice a week; 29% once or twice a month. Syndromic treatment was administered often by 29%; sometimes by 40%; seldom or never by 20%.

Results (continued:) Current use of POCTs for STIs were reported as: always by 5%; often 21%; sometimes 30%; seldom/never 36%. The most common POCTs available in the CHC were pregnancy test 84%; urine dipstick (77%); wet mount test (59%); rapid HIV test (44%) and vaginal pH (33%). The greatest barrier to POCT user was identified as “having to purchase an instrument” in 60% of respondents.



Conclusion: Among NACHC members who diagnose STIs frequently, syndromic treatment is not unusual while 20% wait to treat according to test results. Thus overtreatment or delay in treatment may occur. STI POCTs are needed, but affordable tests and instruments are essential to their adoption.