
Public Health: Main Issues And Ways To Solve Them

I. Public Health Problem

Numerous infections become an epidemic in society, affecting citizens daily. Scientists are ceaselessly making ground breaking discoveries on how to cure infections or contain the spread of them. Herpes is an example of an infection that can affect various parts of the body, infecting the skin or nervous system. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Herpes come in two forms including: type 1 (HSV1) and type 2 (HSV2) [2]. It is illustrated that these two types of STDs are transmitted and spread, with Type 1 spreading through oral contact, resulting in cold sores; while Type 2 is transmitted through sexual contact, in effect causing genital herpes [1]. According to a study at UCSD, it is portrayed that the virus began with the early contact with the species of chimpanzees and humans about six million years ago [5]. The study also illustrates the contraction of herpes was present in apes, about 1.6 million years ago, being portrayed before humans altogether [5]. The word originated from the ancient Greeks, meaning “to creep” reflecting on how the infection works. Unlike other viruses, Herpes do not illustrate any form of symptoms and often is seen as an infection that spreads within a person’s body without notice [6]. In the 18th century, these infections, genital herpes and cold sores, were primarily spread [5]. Today, more than 50 per cent of Americans suffer from the disease, resulting in genital HSV infections [5]. American culture is observed to attain a sexual openness and liberty in modern culture. Americans lack an awareness of sexual contracting of diseases, and do not take preventative measures to utilize protection during intercourse or contact, which therefore results in their engagement of such harmful activity. This virus is seen to be contracted through the following ways of sexual contact, including: vaginal, anal, or oral [1].

Herpes affects a vast and unique demographic, applying to anyone and everyone, without any form of discrimination. According to a study, individuals of America, Europe, or Western Pacific between the ages of 15-49 years depict being infected mostly with type 1 herpes [6]. Without proper knowledge and protection, contracting the disease is a risk for everyone, regardless of their age, sex, gender; as it is highly dependent on those one is in contact with. In addition, youths do not commit to one single person, having multiple partners who may also have preexisting sexually transmitted infections. Because of the modern culture, youths are highly subjected to contracting this virus due to their willingness to partake in sexual acts, without the use of a condom or other protection. These infections can cause long term damage, especially if a woman has herpes while being in labour, she can potentially pass it on to the baby, or be at risk during her labour, putting not only her life but also newborns at risk of death. According to statistics, African American women are at the highest risk of the infection rate with 21%, twice as high compared to men, attaining the highest rate of HIV [1]. This is an infection that must be given more attention, with individuals needing to display awareness and protection to limit their chances of attaining it. It is highly imminent for individuals to be able to take actions in taking care of themselves and putting their medical needs before their desires, as the risks are much higher. Addressing the issue and understanding that there is a problem allows individuals to be able to take the proper initiative in solving it.

II. How to Solve the Public Health Problem

Herpes is considered the oldest diseases, as it was first known by the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates from 460 to 370 BCE. As he documented these symptoms, he was able to explain the spread of the sores over the course of the body, calling it “herpein” meaning “to creep,” as mentioned before [2]. A couple years later, the Roman Emperor Tiberius began an attempt to ban kissing in public events and gatherings. This was a failed attempt as it was simply banning an act rather than educating individuals on the repercussions of such acts without protection. It wasn't until later that the Roman physician Celsus was able to develop the first treatment for herpes, involving a hot iron, that they were able to eradicate the disease temporarily [2]. In society, when individuals come across a disease or virus, it is an important aspect to be able to understand that there is a problem. Herpes is an epidemic that affects a nation, and it is important to bring awareness to it being an issue that is affecting individuals. This is a prime way to be able to solve the spread of this disease as a whole. In addition, it is a prominent aspect to be able to understand the ways of receiving and spreading it as an infection. As mentioned before, this infection is associated with oral and genital warts that can be spread with skin to skin contact, of oral or sexual engagement. Because it is a disease that can be transmitted orally or sexually, it is imminent that to reduce the spread of it, individuals utilize protection when partaking in these actions. In addition, because of its prevalence in society, and how easily one can contract it, it makes it much harder to suppress the continued spread of it. The disease can be unidentifiable, making those who are diagnosed with it, unaware that they even have the disease [7]. One must be highly vigilant on their own medical screenings, going to the doctor regularly and getting checked up occasionally, especially when partaking in any sexual encounters [8]. It is also extremely important to be aware of one's partner's sexual history, and make sure they do not have any STDs or STIs, that they can contract from their sexual partners, and further spread it to others. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some prescriptions have been prescribed to those partaking in activities [8]. This prescription includes the use of any antiviral medications for herpes or any other infections. These antiviral drugs are used to be able to reduce or eliminate herpes for individuals that have been targets of it [8]. In addition, according to The World Health Organization, WHO, they have been attempting to develop new advancement methods in international health laws to be able to prevent and reduce neonatal herpes, of both Type 1 and Type 2 [5]. These prevention research focuses on ways of developing and researching different methods of vaccination, focusing on microbicides that may be applied to the private areas of the vaginal opening or rectum during intimate course to be able to dismantle any viruses or bacteria that may be lingering to cause the infection to spread [5]. These microbicides are being further researched and tested so they can come in different forms of gels or creams, as well as films and suppositories [5]. Also, educating the public about STDs and other forms of disease is the first and foremost way of suppressing the spread if it. High school students are more prone to taking part in sexual acts and should be educated on the matter, at a young age. It gives them insight as they get older and makes them aware of the types of infections that can be brought about through such acts. It can begin to make them cautious of their actions, and also the partners they begin doing such acts with. Bringing educators that can give more information on first hand experience with the disease, or others that they know have been targeted by the disease can also create fear and caution when these students take part in the actions of sexual intercourse. In addition, students should be able to talk about their sexual activity with counsellors, and ways of getting rid of diseases they may have contracted. Free condoms and other protective services should be provided free of charge to students, and should be encouraged to be taken by students that are intimate or plan on getting intimate.

III. Public Health in the Future

Herpes is a sexually transmitted infection that can risk a person's life. Warts and lesions are the most common symptoms and make come across as extremely painful. Although this may seem very trivial, these warts do have the potential to decrease a human's quality of life extremely. Monogamous relationships, along with knowing your partner's medical history can be beneficial at protecting oneself to the subjection of the disease [4]. Protection in forms of condoms is also another way at decreasing the risk for attaining the disease. According to research, the use of latex condoms and female condoms can help for any form of homosexual relationships. If one does attain the outbreak of the disease, they should not continue contact or physical activity, such as sexual acts of kissing or sex, until the outbreak is cleared by the doctor. If they do, they can potentially spread the disease to those they engage with, thus creating a domino effect of spreading herpes to individuals. In addition, one should engage in healthy behaviours both physically and mentally, engaging in healthy eating habits to keep one's immune system strong, and able to fight off the disease. Zinc as well as vitamin C are key ingredients to keeping the infection from spreading, and allowing one's immune system to be strong [2]. Through these healthy habits, one can reduce the spread of herpes.

I think the best way to prevent such a virus is to be able to educate individuals, and do the best to promote healthy habits for the people around the world. It is mind blowing to think that simple human acts can cause so many problems for individuals, but on the contrary it takes less effort to protect oneself than having to fight against infections because a lack of protection. Herpes does not have a cure, and it is imminent to spread awareness in regards to it. Individuals must also be open to taking initiative if infected with the disease through therapy on safe sexual practices. This will create a more aware environment while also reducing stigma toward those that attain the infection. Herpes is an infection that needs to be taken more seriously, and more awareness must be brought to reducing the risk of attaining it and its spread.