

Sexually transmitted diseases spiral in Britain

The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among mature adults in Britain has practically doubled in less than a decade, according to a study.

Researchers monitored STD between 1996 and 2003 among people aged 45 and above in 19 sexual health clinics in West Midlands. A total of 4,445 STD cases were identified among heterosexual men and women aged 45 and older during that time.

The most common infection among them was genital warts, accounting for almost half of the episodes. Herpes was the next most common, accounting for almost one in five.

Men and those between the ages of 55 and 59 were significantly more likely to have an STD than anyone else. Among women, incidence of STD was highest among those aged 45 to 54; among men, it was highest among those aged 55 to 60 plus.

Cases of Chlamydia, herpes, warts, gonorrhoea and syphilis all rose sharply. Cumulative rate of infections more than doubled from 16.7 per 100,000 in 1996 to 36.3 per 100,000 in 2003.

In 1996, this age group comprised 3.9 percent of all clinic visits; by 2003, this had risen to 4.5 percent, reports Eurekalert.

While the numbers of infections identified in younger age groups rose 97 percent during the period of the study, it rose by 127 percent in those identified in the over 45 age group.

Programmes aimed at preventing STD should be tailored towards different age groups and do more to dispel myths and assumptions about the level of sexual activity among older age groups, said the authors of the report.

'Indeed, it may be argued that older people are more susceptible as they are less likely to use condoms than younger people,' they said, adding that as successive waves of people with more liberal sexual attitudes and behaviours age, the problem is likely to worsen.

These findings were published in online version of Sexually Transmitted Infections.

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