

## SIGNIFICANCE

Nearly 20 million new sexually transmitted diseases (STD) are reported in the U.S. each year resulting in health consequences to the patient; and a direct cost of nearly 16 billion dollars to the country.

Screening and treatment, reimbursement of STD services, and collaboration among health care entities are paramount to effective public health interventions.

The aim of this study was to determine current practices and perceived barriers to this effort.



## PURPOSE

To survey and interview staff from local health departments/districts (LHD) on current attitudes, knowledge and capacity to bill third party payers and perceived barriers to providing STD services.

To interview federally qualified health centers (FQHC) and emergency departments (ED) in eastern North Carolina on perceived barriers to providing STD services as well as effective collaboration among these three entities.

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## METHODOLOGY

This mixed methods study was performed with 183 staff members from 25 eastern NC LHD as well as 133 staff members from 13 FQHCs and medical directors from 2 emergency departments.

A 42 item Qualtrics Survey to measure attitudes as well as knowledge and capacity was electronically given to 25 eastern NC LHD between September 1, 2015 to November 1, 2015.

The face to face interviews were conducted between September 1, 2015 to January 29, 2016 by a member of the research team with the LHDs, FQHCs and EDs.

IRB approval by East Carolina University.



## FINDINGS

Twenty LHDs (80%) reported they were billing third party payers but did not have consistency in contracts or clear understanding of contracts/reimbursement.

55% of LHD staff supported and 45% did not support billing third party payers for these STD services.

Barriers to screening:  
limits to screening  
insurance woes  
patient factors  
*Unique to LHDs was "a culture of free"*

Barriers to reimbursement:  
issues with coding  
insurance contracts

Quality of collaboration:  
relationships  
knowledge of other's services  
time or system constraints



## DISCUSSION

This study is the first to identify perceived barriers to screening, reimbursement and collaboration according to providers from LHDs, FQHCs and EDs.

The themes provide a better understanding of barriers encountered by those working on the front lines.

From a systems perspective, further investigation of contract issues and confidentiality of explanation of benefits (EOB) are paramount to the development of remedial strategies among LHDs.

Through increased knowledge, providers can increase their efforts in addressing these issues and ultimately improving STD services.