

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Ms J Carney

to Minister for Health

HIV/AIDS

1. Was there any reduction in the STD rates in the Territory 2004-05?
2. Is the measured incidence of notifiable diseases – bacterial and sexually transmitted diseases- going up?

ANSWERS

The statistics from the Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) Surveillance January – June 2005 demonstrates that there is no reduction in the overall rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) in the Territory 2004-05.

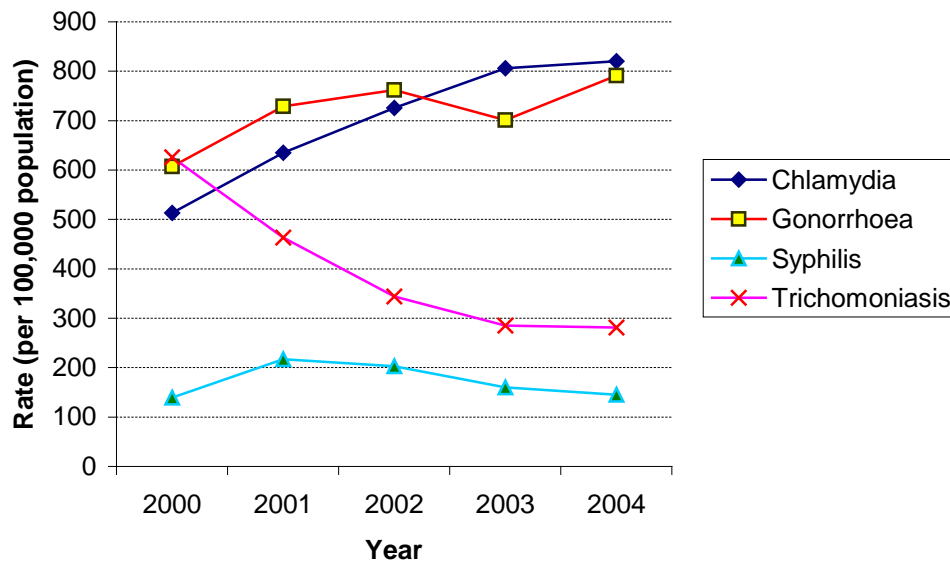
The same statistics demonstrate that measured incidence of notifiable diseases - bacterial and sexually transmitted diseases - are going up.

Data concerning Sexually transmitted infection (STI) notifications in recent years are displayed below. The 2004 annual rates for gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomoniasis were 792, 820, 145 and 281 cases per 100,000 population respectively.

Table: Number and annualised rate of notifiable STIs for the first half of the year, NT, 2004-2005

Quarter	Gonorrhoea		Chlamydia		Syphilis		Trichomoniasis	
	Cases	Rate	Cases	Rate	Case	Rate	Case	Rate
2005								
Jan-Mar	443	874.0	386	761.6	44	86.8	168	331.5
Apr-Jun	558	1100.9	477	941.1	68	134.2	179	353.2
Total	1001	987.5	863	851.4	112	110.5	347	342.3
2004								
Jan-Mar	376	752.3	379	758.3	67	134.1	179	358.2
Apr-Jun	452	904.4	448	896.4	85	170.1	115	230.1
Total	828	828.4	827	827.4	156	156.1	294	294.1

Figure: Rates of notifiable STIs, NT, 2000-2004



Over the past five years the trend for notifications of gonorrhoea and chlamydia has been consistently upwards. This has been the case since the mid 1990s. It is likely that a great deal of this increase has been due to the availability of polymerase chain reaction tests. This technology allows people to be tested using a urine test or a vaginal swab a woman can take herself and so is much more acceptable to access. This has been accompanied by a great increase in the amount of testing. However, it is thought that, in relation to chlamydia, there has been a true increase in disease transmission throughout Australia that is responsible for the increased rates.

Syphilis notifications have been slowly declining over the past 5-10 years.

Trichomonas notifications have been declining in the past five years. However, it is highly likely that this is due to decreased testing related to variable and declining (until recently) availability of the polymerase chain reaction tests from laboratories.