Gonorrhea Is Not The New AIDS

August 10, 2012 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

The LGBT blog Queerty wrote this attention-grabbing headline in response to recent news about gonorrhea: "Super Bug: Is Gonorrhea the New AIDS?"

The post by Dan Avery is the result of new guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to health care providers on how to treat gonorrhea.
Here's an excerpt from the POZ Treatment News article about the new guidelines:

"*The CDC notes that gonorrhea has developed resistance to every antibiotic recommended for treatment of* Neisseria gonorrhoeae, *the bacterium responsible for gonorrhea, leaving only a class of drugs called the cephalosporins, which include Suprax (cefixime) and Rocephin. In turn, the recommended first-line therapy for gonorrhea has been Suprax, an oral antibiotic, combined with either Zithromax (azithromycin) or doxycycline.*

"*Now the CDC is concerned about an uptick in laboratory data showing that Suprax is becoming less effective in treating* N. gonorrhoeae. *Continued use of*

the drug, the agency worries, may prompt the bacterium to develop resistance to all cephalosporins. The CDC is therefore recommending that Suprax no longer be prescribed and Rocephin--which needs to be administered by a health care provider--used in its place, along with either Zithromax or doxycycline."

Just by issuing these new guidelines, it's clear that the CDC is worried. Which then prompts the question: How worried should we be?

I can't put an exact measure on it, but I feel safe in saying that this should provide motivation for those who have become weary of safer sex, particularly condom use.

If untreated, gonorrhea can spread to the blood or joints, which can be life threatening. And gonorrhea can make it easier to both give and get HIV.

As Avery points out in his post:

"If there's a takeaway from the CDC pulling the alarm bell, its that we have to remember that AIDS is not the only sexually-transmitted infection out there."

Agreed (except that "HIV" would have been more accurate). And although their headline set us up expecting the answer to be yes, Queerty made it clear the answer was no, gonorrhea is not the new AIDS.

Scaring people unnecessarily doesn't help in the long run with prevention efforts, which is why I chose the headline I did for this post. That said, I plan on keeping a close eye on how this story develops.

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