23 – Sexually Transmitted Infections: Genital Ulcers Diseases (GUD)

Speaker: Khalil Ghanem, MD

Sexually Transmitted Infections: Genital Ulcer Diseases

Khalil G. Ghanem, MD, PhD
Professor of Medicine
Division of Infectious Diseases
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

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- **Disclosures of Financial Relationships with Relevant Commercial Interests**

  - None

NOTE

- I have tried to use patient-first language throughout. When the terms 'women' and 'men' are used, I am referring to cis-gender women and men unless otherwise specified
  - Data on the epidemiology and management of STIs in transgender populations are very limited
- All photos are freely available from the following website unless otherwise noted: http://www.cdc.gov/std/training/clinicalslides/slides-dl.htm

GENITAL ULCER DISEASES (GUD)

- Syphilis (*Treponema pallidum*)
- HSV-2
- HSV-1
- Chancroid *(Haemophilus ducreyi)*
- Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) *(Chlamydia trachomatis)*
- Granuloma inguinale (Donovanosis) *(Klebsiella granulomatis)*
- Monkeypox

PAIN AND GUD

Which ulcers are PAINFUL?

- HSV
- Chancroid
- Monkeypox

Which ulcers are PAINLESS?

- Syphilis*
- LGV (but lymphadenopathy is PAINFUL)
- Granuloma inguinale

*** >30% of patients have multiple painful lesions**

"KEY WORDS" IN GUD

- SYPHILIS: Single, **painless** ulcer or chancre at the inoculation site with heaped-up borders & clean base; painless bilateral LAD **(>30% of patients have multiple painful lesions)**
- HSV: multiple, **painful**, superficial, vesicular or ulcerative lesions with erythematous base

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"KEY WORDS" IN GUD CONTINUED

- **CHANCROID**: painful, indurated, 'ragged' genital ulcers & tender **suppurative inguinal adenopathy** (50%); **kissing lesions** on thigh
- **GI**: **Painless**, progressive (destructive), **"serpiginous"** ulcerative lesions, without regional lymphadenopathy; beefy red with white border & highly vascular
- **LGV**: short-lived **painless** genital ulcer accompanied by **painful suppurative inguinal lymphadenopathy; "groove sign"**

QUESTION #1

A 35-year-old woman presents with a painless ulcer on her vulva and one on her soft palate following unprotected vaginal and receptive oral sex 3 weeks earlier. She has no other symptoms.

Examination reveals the two ulcers with heaped-up borders and a clean base.

QUESTION #1

Which of the following diagnostic tests is **inappropriate** to obtain?

A. Serum RPR
B. Serum VDRL
C. Serum treponemal EIA
D. Darkfield microscopy on a specimen obtained from the oral ulcer
E. Darkfield microscopy on a specimen obtained from the vulvar ulcer

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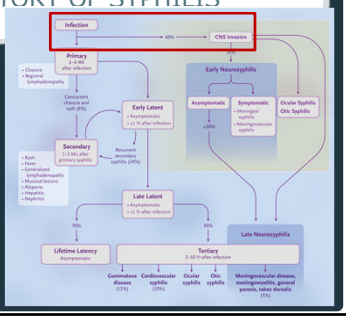
NATURAL HISTORY OF SYPHILIS

Sexual transmission (only occurs in early stages)
- Risk of infection after 1 exposure: 40%
- Index patient is most contagious during 1° and 2° stage, less so in early latent stage

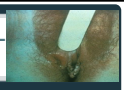
Vertical transmission (may occur during any stage)
- ~80% transmission in the early stages
- ~10% transmission in the late stages

Rarely, transmission may occur through **blood transfusions** and **organ transplantations**



N Engl J Med 2020;382:845-854

EARLY SYPHILIS: CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS



- Incubation ~3 weeks
- Primary: chancre; LAD; resolves 3-6 weeks
- Secondary: **Systemic symptoms**: low-grade fever, malaise, sore throat, adenopathy
  - RASHES: [1]evanescent, copper-colored, macular (dry) rash; followed by [2] a red papular eruption (involving palms and soles in 60%); mucosal lesions (gray plaques or ulcers) ; condyloma lata- wart-like lesions that develop in moist areas
  - Other manifestations: Patchy alopecia, hepatitis (mild elevation of aminotransferases with disproportionately high alkaline phosphatase), gastritis, periostitis, glomerulonephritis, etc.

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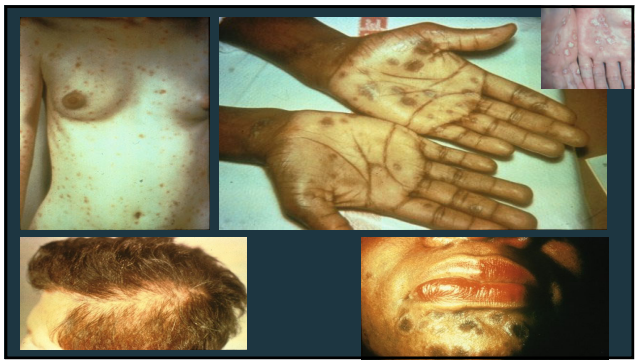


NEUROLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF SYPHILIS

- **Can occur during any stage of infection******
- **Symptomatic Early Neurosyphilis**
  - Occurs within the **first year** after infection
  - **Mainly among PWH**
  - **Presents as meningitis** (headache; photophobia; cranial nerve abnormalities; ocular symptoms)
- **Symptomatic Late Neurosyphilis (tertiary syphilis)**
  - Usually occurs ~10+ years AFTER primary infection
  - Divided into 2 categories:
    - Meningovascular
    - Parenchymatous

LATE NEUROSYPHILIS (TERTIARY)

Meningovascular

- Endarteritis of the small blood vessels of the meninges, brain, and spinal cord.
- Typical clinical manifestations include **strokes (middle cerebral artery distribution is classic)** and seizures

Parenchymatous

- Due to actual destruction of nerve cells
- **Tabes Dorsalis**: shooting pains, ataxia, cranial nerve abnormalities; optic atrophy
- **General Paresis**: dementia, psychosis, slurring speech; Argyll Robertson pupil

OTHER TERTIARY MANIFESTATIONS

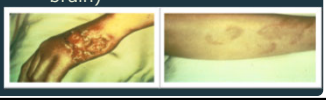
Cardiovascular

- 15-30 years after latency
- Men 3X> women
- Aortic aneurysm; aortic insufficiency; coronary artery stenosis; myocarditis

~30% of patients with cardiovascular and gummatous syphilis will have asymptomatic neurosyphilis- perform CSF exam!

Late benign syphilis

- 'Gummas'
- Granulomatous process involving skin, cartilage, bone (less commonly in viscera, mucosa, eyes, brain)



SYPHILIS: EYES AND EARS

Eyes

- Ocular manifestation may occur during any stage and may involve any portion of the eye
  - Uveitis & neuroretinitis: mainly secondary stage
  - Interstitial keratitis: occurs in both congenital (typically at age 5-20; 80% bilateral) and acquired (both early and late infections)
  - **CSF examination normal in ~30% of cases of ocular syphilis**

Ears

- Sensorineural hearing loss w/vestibular complaints (sudden or fluctuating hearing loss, tinnitus or vertigo)
  - Congenital (early and late)
  - Acquired (secondary and late stages)
  - **CSF examination is normal in at least 40% of cases of otic syphilis**

*****No need for a CSF examination in patients who only have ocular or otic symptoms/signs**

SYPHILIS SEROLOGICAL TESTING

Nontreponemal tests

- RPR (serum) or VDRL (serum or CSF)
- **False positives:** endemic treponematoses, old age, pregnancy, autoimmune disease (APS), viral infections
- **False negatives:** PROZONE effect and in early infection
- Reactive result must be confirmed with treponemal test
- Four-fold (i.e. 2-dilution) decline after treatment = CURE (irrespective of the end-titer)
- **Titers will decline with or without treatment**

Treponemal tests

- MHA-TP, TPPA, FTA-Abs, EIAs, CIA
- Detect IgG +/- IgM antibodies against treponemal antigens
- **False positives:** Endemic treponemal infections (e.g. yaws, pinta, bejel); Lyme disease; rarely in autoimmune conditions
- **False negatives:** Early primary syphilis
- **Once reactive, always reactive even after appropriate therapy**
  - **Exception: ~25% of persons treated early in primary syphilis may serorevert years later**

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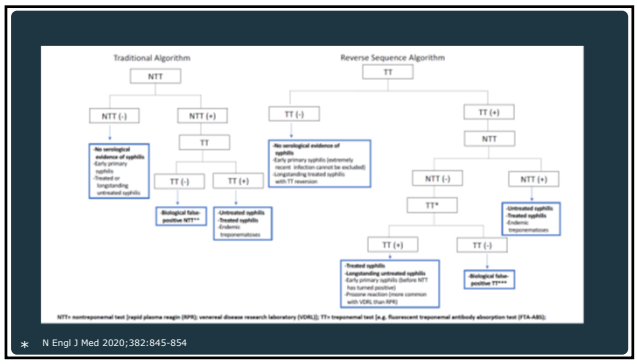


SYPHILIS: DIAGNOSTICS

- Darkfield microscopy or PCR for **genital** ulcers of primary syphilis; **sensitivity of serology in primary syphilis only~70%**
- **Sensitivity of serology for secondary or early latent syphilis ~100%**
- Over time, non-treponemal serological titers decline and may become nonreactive even in the absence of therapy while treponemal titers remain reactive for life

NEUROSYPHILIS: DIAGNOSTICS

- No single test can be used to diagnose neurosyphilis
  - CSF pleocytosis **most sensitive** marker
  - 50% of neurosyphilis cases may have negative CSF VDRL; it is **highly specific**, but **insensitive**
  - CSF treponemal tests are very sensitive but NOT specific (i.e. high false+)
    - May be used to **rule out** neurosyphilis
  - ~30% of persons with LATE neurosyphilis may have nonreactive SERUM nontreponemal tests

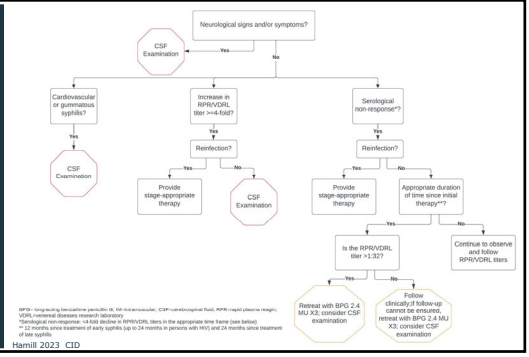
A FEW IMPORTANT CONCEPTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT NEUROSYPHILIS, OCULAR SYPHILIS, AND OTIC SYPHILIS

A normal CSF examination rules out neurosyphilis, but it does not rule out ocular or otic syphilis

A patient with ocular only or otic only signs and/or symptoms does not need a CSF examination. An immediate through clinical evaluation is warranted and if the clinical picture is consistent with ocular or otic syphilis, start antibiotic therapy

A patient with both neurological signs/symptoms and ocular or otic signs/symptoms should undergo a CSF examination. While it may not impact the treatment decision, it may impact diagnostic considerations [patients may have neurological manifestations due to something other than syphilis- you don't want to delay the diagnosis]

Who Should Have a CSF Exam?



SYPHILIS THERAPY

- Early stages (primary, secondary, early latent)
  - 2.4 MU of long-acting benzathine penicillin or doxycycline 100mg PO BID X 14 days
- Late latent/unknown duration
  - 2.4 MU of long acting benzathine penicillin G IM X3 (over 2 weeks) [7.2 MU total] or doxycycline 100mg PO BID X 4 weeks

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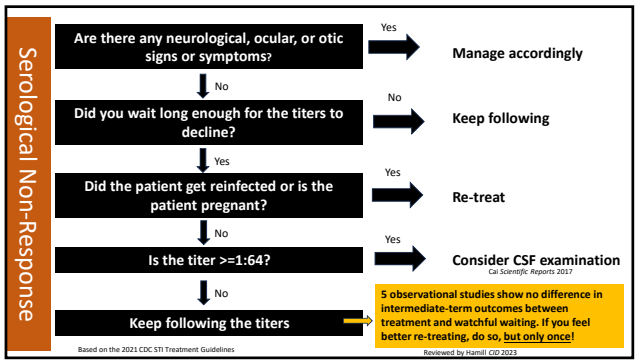

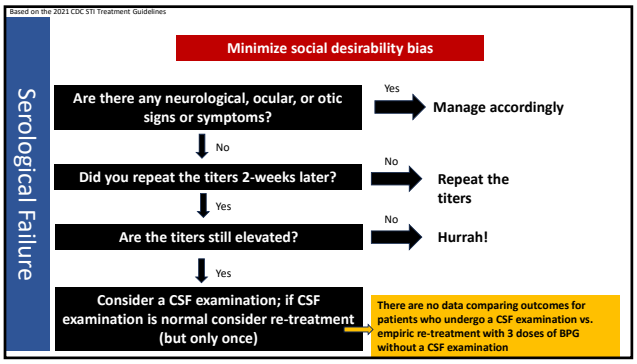

SYPHILIS THERAPY CONTINUED

- Neurosyphilis/Ocular/Otic syphilis
  - Aqueous penicillin 18 to 24 MU IV X 10-14 days
  - Ceftriaxone 1-2g IV/IM X 10-14 days (2nd line regimen)
  - **Follow-up CSF exams are NOT necessary if patient improves clinically, serologically, and is not immunosuppressed (PWH on ART at time of diagnosis does not need a f/u CSF exam)**


Normalization of Serum Rapid Plasma Reagin Titer Predicts Normalization of Cerebrospinal Fluid and Clinical Abnormalities after Treatment of Neurosyphilis

SCIENTIFIC REPORTS

Serological Response Predicts Normalization of Cerebrospinal Fluid Abnormalities at Six Months after Treatment in HIV-Negative Neurosyphilis Patients

- Jarisch-Herxheimer: within 6 hours (up to 24 hours) after therapy of (usually) early syphilis; antipyretics only; **may induce early labor**

QUESTION #2

PREVIEW QUESTION

A pregnant patient with HIV(CD4 260 cells/mm^3; HIV RNA <50 copies/ml) on ART presents with a diffuse rash.

On examination, she has a temperature of 38.3°C and a macular rash on her trunk and extremities including her palms.

Serum RPR is reactive at a titer of 1:2048 and FTA-ABS is reactive

She has a history of severe hives to penicillin but has tolerated cephalosporins.

QUESTION #2

PREVIEW QUESTION

Which of the following antibiotics is most appropriate?

A. Azithromycin
B. Benzathine penicillin G
C. Ceftriaxone
D. Doxycycline

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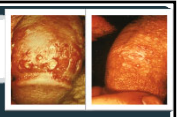
SYPHILIS & HIV

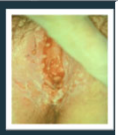
- Clinical manifestations similar but timeline may be compressed
  - PWH more susceptible to early neurosyphilis
- Testing and therapy similar to HIV negative
- Serological response may be slower among PWH
- Follow-up is more frequent (every 3 months)

SYPHILIS & PREGNANCY

- Screen at 1st prenatal visit
- Screen higher risk patients and those living in high-prevalence areas twice in the 3rd trimester: at 28 weeks and again at the time of delivery
- Screen all those who deliver a stillborn infant after 20 weeks' gestation
- **Pregnant penicillin-allergic patients with syphilis need to be desensitized to penicillin and treated with a penicillin-based regimen. There are NO OTHER OPTIONS (not even ceftriaxone)**

HSV





- Both HSV-1 and HSV-2 cause genital disease
- HSV-1 is now a more frequent cause of genital disease (especially in young women and MSM)
- In general, HSV-1 recurrences are less severe and less frequent and asymptomatic shedding is less frequent
- Prior infection with HSV-1 may attenuate severity of HSV-2 infection
- HSV suppressive therapy in PWH with a history of HSV and who are starting ART- but only if their CD4 <200 cells/mm^3

HSV TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

- Both HSV-1 (particularly among young women and MSM) and 2 cause genital infections
- Most people are unaware that they are infected
- Asymptomatic shedding is the most common reason for transmission
- Condoms and antiviral suppressive therapy decrease risk of male to female transmission by 30% and 55% over time, respectively (condoms less effective from female to male)
- Currently, no formal screening recommendations
- C-section ONLY in those who have active lesions or prodromal symptoms at the time of delivery

HSV: DIAGNOSTICS IN PATIENTS WITH GENITAL ULCERS

- Tzanck smear (40% sensitive)
- Culture (sensitivity 30-80%)
  - Mainly used for antiviral susceptibility testing
- Antigen detection (~70% sensitive)
- PCR (FDA cleared, >90% sensitive)
  - **Preferred diagnostic test when a lesion is present**

HSV: DIAGNOSTICS IN ASYMPTOMATIC PATIENTS

- Use Glycoprotein G-based type-specific EIA assays
  - If gG2 is reactive, patient has genital herpes
    - Assay has low specificity depending on EIA index value cutoff; for an EIA cutoff <3, a second confirmatory test that uses a different HSV antigen must be performed (HSV Biokit or HSV Western Blot)
  - If gG1 is reactive, patient either has oral herpes or genital herpes (assay has low sensitivity)
- Serologic testing **NOT** routinely recommended for screening
- **Never obtain IgM or try to interpret IgM results!**

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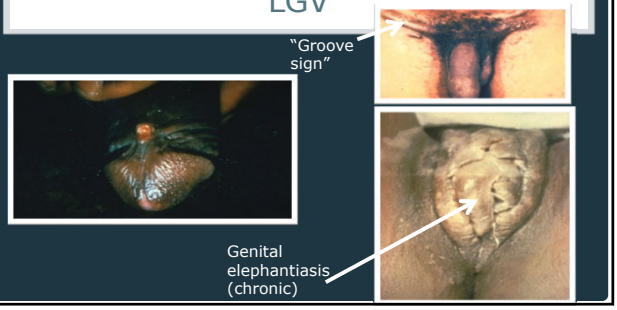
HSV: PREGNANCY

- Risk of vertical transmission if mom acquires FIRST episode (i.e. primary infection) of herpes at time of delivery is up to 80%
- Risk of vertical transmission if mom has RECURRENT episode of herpes at time of delivery <1%
- C-sections are recommended ONLY IF ACTIVE LESIONS OR PRODROMAL SYMPTOMS (i.e. vulvar pain/burning) PRESENT AT DELIVERY
  - ACOG: "For women with a primary or nonprimary first-episode genital HSV infection during the 3rd trimester of pregnancy, cesarean delivery MAY BE OFFERED due to the possibility of prolonged shedding". ACOG Practice Bulletin #220, May 2020
- Efficacy data on routine acyclovir use during 3rd trimester of pregnancy to prevent HSV vertical transmission are lacking.
  - ACOG: Those with a clinical history of genital herpes should be offered suppressive viral therapy at or beyond 36 weeks of gestation ACOG Practice Bulletin #220, May 2020 & Cochrane Systematic Review 2008: https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD004946.pub2

CHLAMYDIA TRACHOMATIS L1-L3: LGV

- Classical manifestation is a short-lived **painless** genital ulcer accompanied by **painful** inguinal lymphadenopathy
- Outbreaks in US and Western Europe associated with **proctitis** particularly among MSM**********
  - Rectal pain, tenesmus, rectal bleeding/discharge
  - May be mistaken for inflammatory bowel disease histologically (early syphilitic proctitis may also be mistaken for IBD on histology)

LGV

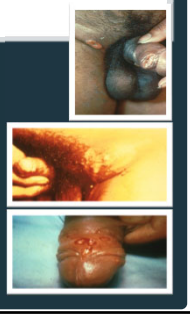


LGV DIAGNOSIS & THERAPY

- **Routine NAATs** do not distinguish between serotypes D-K and L1-L3 (LGV). **Multiplex PCR** can be performed for specific serotypes but is NOT commercially available. Serology is NOT standardized and is NOT recommended
- Therapy: **doxycycline 100mg PO BID X 3* weeks (preferred)** or azithromycin 1g PO q week X 3 weeks (alternate)
- **Patients with *C trachomatis* and a + rectal NAAT:**
  - **Mild symptoms- treat with doxycycline for 1 week**
  - **Moderate to severe symptoms- treat with doxycycline for 3 weeks**

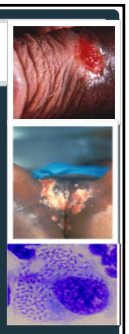
CHANCROID

- *Haemophilus ducreyi*
  - Endemic in parts of the southern US. Rates have gone down
  - Increased risk with HIV infection and commercial sex work
- Symptoms: painful, indurated, 'ragged' genital ulcers & tender suppurative inguinal adenopathy (50%); kissing lesions on thigh; 10% of patients co-infected with syphilis or HSV; bacterial superinfection not uncommon
- Dx: culture (80% sensitive) [antigen detection and PCR not widely available]
- Rx: Azithromycin 1g PO X1 OR Ceftriaxone 250mg IM X1 (erythromycin and ciprofloxacin may also be used)
- Treat all partners in preceding 60 days



GRANULOMA INGUINALE OR DONOVANOSIS

- *Klebsiella granulomatis (Calymmatobacterium granulomatis)*
- Not endemic in US; common in SE Asia (India), & Southern Africa (recently eradicated in Australia)
- Painless, progressive (destructive), "serpiginous" ulcerative lesions, without regional LAD (pseudobuboes occasionally); beefy red with white border & highly vascular
- Dx: tissue biopsy (no culture test; PCR not FDA cleared); demonstrating the organisms in macrophages, called **Donovan bodies**, using **Wright-Giemsa** stain (NOT Gram's stain)
- Rx: Doxycycline 100mg PO BID X 3 weeks (or until resolution) OR azithromycin 1g PO q week X3 (can also use trimethoprim/sulfa)



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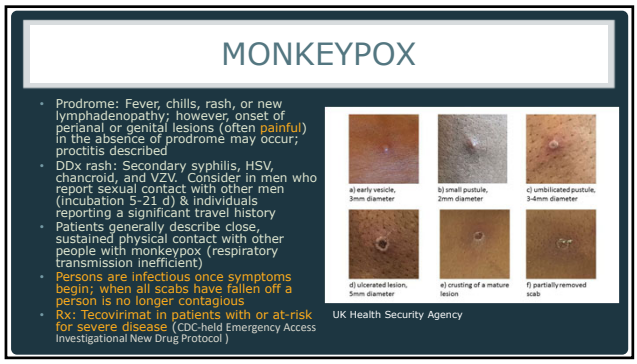

GUD	Pain	Characteristics	Diagnosis	Treatment
HSV 1 & 2	Painful	Multiple, superficial, vesicular/ulcerative, erythematous base	-NAATs -Culture (sensitivity ~70%) -Serology	-Acyclovir etc. -Foscarnet (resistant HSV) -Cidofovir parenteral or topical (resistant HSV)
Syphilis (T. pallidum)	Painless	Single, well circumscribed, heaped-up borders, clean base	- Serology - PCR	-Penicillin (preferred) -Doxycycline (alternate for early and late latent)
Chancroid (H. ducreyi)	Painful	Indurated, tender suppurative inguinal LAD (50%); kissing lesions on thigh	- Culture - PCR	-Azithromycin -Ceftriaxone -Erythromycin -Ciprofloxacin
LGV (C. trachomatis)	Painless	short-lived ulcer, painful suppurative LAD, "groove sign" PROCTITIS	- NAATs - Serology - Culture (rarely)	-Doxycycline (preferred) -Azithromycin (alternate)
Granuloma Inguinale (Klebsiella granulomatis)	Painless	Progressive "serpiginous" without LAD; beefy red with white border & highly vascular	- Biopsy	-Doxycycline -Azithromycin -Bactrim