

BY SCOTT PHELPS December 7, 2016



Marriage rates in the United States are at an all time low. Reported cases of sexually transmitted diseases are at an all time high. These two statistics share a clear and direct relationship, although you would not know it from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) annual reporting on the STD epidemic. What is so hard about saying what is true?

In 1983 there were no reported cases of chlamydia. In 1984, the CDC recorded 7,594 cases nationwide and after 32 years of prevention efforts, reported chlamydial infections have reached an all time high of 1,526,658 cases in 2015. That's an increase of 20,103%.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, taxpayers spend \$94,000,000 per year on STD prevention through the CDC. Despite this "prevention" effort, the CDC claims that: *"The cost of STDs to the U.S. health care system is estimated to be as much as \$16 billion annually."* This is a case study in failed governmental policy.

To no one's surprise, STD prevention director Dr. Jonathan Mermin explains that the problem is a lack of funding: *"STD prevention resources across the nation are stretched thin,"* he said. *"In recent years more than half of state and local STD programs have experienced budget cuts...³"*

This is the typical government response: *"We need more money!"* One might reasonably ask, *"What have you been doing all these years? What did you do with the money we already gave you?"* No. The CDC doesn't need more money. It needs common sense, rooted in fact.

In releasing the data on record high STD rates, the CDC offers the following solution: *"Talk openly about STDs, get tested regularly, and reduce risk by using condoms or practicing mutual monogamy if sexually active."*

Really? That's it? This is the same thing the CDC says every year as STDs continue to rise. The American people should mark the new CDC report with an "F" and hand it back to the agency along with this teacher's note: *"Your paper is missing the key component in solving this problem."*

That missing component is the clear, objective fact that the best way to avoid STDs is to reserve all sexual activity for marriage. Remarkably, the 154-page CDC report does not mention the word marriage. Not once. This is problematic because marriage is the only true remedy for the spread of STDs. Those who save sex for marriage and remain faithful eliminate their risk of exposure to STDs. Done.

As marriage rates continue to fall the corresponding increase in STDs rates is not coincidental and until 1999 the CDC regularly acknowledged this clear association. The 1995-1999 CDC STD Surveillance Reports state:

"During the past two decades, the age of initiation of sexual activity has steadily decreased and age at first marriage has increased, resulting in increases in premarital sexual experience...."

Non-marital sexual activity with multiple partners is the singular cause of the proliferation of STDs and yet for some reason all CDC surveillance reports since 1999 omit the above statement and make no reference to marriage at all. Instead we get, *"talk openly about STDs"* and the obligatory, *"use condoms."*

There aren't multiple solutions for the prevention of STDs. There is only one. If the CDC wants to get serious about STD prevention, it can drastically slice its budget and simply tell the truth: *Choosing to reserve all sexual activity for marriage is the safest, healthiest, lifestyle.*

With a new team shaking up Washington, let's not forget about Atlanta – home of the CDC. A major policy shift at the CDC is long overdue. It is time to stop wasting taxpayer dollars on expensive and ineffective condom promotion programs in exchange for a clear and compelling message on the benefits and protections that marriage affords to individuals and society. The only way to prevent STDs is to avoid non-marital sexual activity. When marriage rates go up, STD rates will go down.

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