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**Comments on the proposed USPSTF Draft Research Plan for:  
*Sexually Transmitted Infections: Behavioral Counseling***

**Submitted by: Men's Health Network**

Men's Health Network (MHN) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play and pray with health awareness and disease prevention messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation.

MHN appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the draft research plan statement by the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) regarding Sexual Transmitted Infections: Behavioral Counseling.

We applaud the USPSTF's efforts to curb the spread of Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STDs) in adults, and the B rating regarding screening for chlamydia and gonorrhea in women. However, we have some concerns regarding the lack of access to screening for men, and the effect that will have on women.

While we agree that STD counseling should be part of many healthcare visits, and a necessary component of a preventive healthcare visit, there is little opportunity for men to receive counseling because the Affordable Care Act (ACA) does not provide for regular preventive healthcare visits for men as it does for women.

Due to male specific care being left out of the ACA, men will not have an opportunity to receive STD counseling unless they are seriously ill, injured at work, in an accident, or playing sports, or if they suffer from an STD so painful as to require medical care, which makes the STD "counseling" rather moot. See 1557 Discrimination comments to HHS Secretary Burwell, November 6, 2015 - <http://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/ACA-MHN-discrimination-comments-110915.pdf>

The present recommendation:

"Sexually transmitted infections counseling - The USPSTF recommends intensive behavioral counseling for all sexually active adolescents and for adults who are at increased risk for sexually transmitted infections,"

...might seem to reach men and women ("adults"), but since the USPSTF recommends that only women be screened for gonorrhea and Chlamydia ("Chlamydia screening: women" and "Gonorrhea screening: women" found at <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Name/uspstf-a-and-b-recommendations>), rather perplexing recommendations since most cases are transmitted between men and women, we are concerned that healthcare professionals will be trained by habit and USPSTF guidance to think of STD awareness as an issue only for women. Therefore, we suggest that "adults" be changed to "men and women."

We thank the Task Force for the opportunity to comment, and suggest that the Research Plan include research on the ways that STDs are communicated.

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