

The natural history of *Chlamydia trachomatis* infection in women: a multi-parameter evidence synthesis

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Chlamydia trachomatis (CT) infection is a cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), ectopic pregnancy (EP) and infertility but is usually asymptomatic. The National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP) offers sexually active young men and women annual screening for CT, but its effectiveness and value for money have not been definitely established. There has been no consensus on how much reproductive damage untreated CT infection can cause or on the best methods for estimating this.

The purpose of this project was to assemble all the evidence on CT infection, PID, EP and tubal factor infertility (TFI) to see if a consistent picture could be formed of the role of CT in causing reproductive damage. We looked at the worldwide literature on the risks of these outcomes following CT, and also at the UK evidence on CT prevalence, and routinely reported PID and EP seen in general practitioner surgeries, hospitals and sexually transmitted disease clinics, and at evidence on infertility from UK surveys.

We found a way of interpreting all this evidence which provided a single consistent set of estimates. It was confirmed that untreated CT infection posed a significant threat to reproductive health. Our findings show that screening is beneficial to the individual, but a focus on treating infections at the time they are acquired may have greater benefit.

The cost-effectiveness of the NCSP now needs to be reassessed, using these new estimates of how much reproductive damage CT infection can cause.

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This report

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