

## **Gender differences in health care-seeking behavior for sexually transmitted diseases: a population-based study in Nairobi, Kenya**

### **Abstract:**

**BACKGROUND:** Health care-seeking behavior for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is important in STD/HIV control. **GOAL:** The goal of this study was to describe the proportion seeking care, patient delay, and choice of provider among men and women with STD-related complaints in Nairobi, Kenya. **STUDY DESIGN:** A population-based questionnaire was administered in 7 randomly selected clusters (small geographic areas covering approximately 150 households each). **RESULTS:** Of the 291 respondents reporting complaints, 20% of men versus 35% of women did not seek care, mainly because symptoms were not considered severe, symptoms had disappeared, or as a result of lack of money. Of those who sought care, women waited longer than men (41 vs. 16 days). Most men and women went to the private sector (72% and 57%, respectively), whereas the informal sector was rarely visited (13% and 16%, respectively). Relatively more women visited the government sector (28% vs. 15%). Because women were mostly monogamous, they did not relate their complaints to sexual intercourse, which hampered prompt care-seeking. **CONCLUSION:** Women should be convinced to seek care promptly, eg, through health education in communities.