Preferences for an Electronic Partner Notification System for STIs: A Discrete Choice Experiment

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BACKGROUND

- Electronic partner notification (ePN) is a digital platform for people diagnosed with bacterial STIs to anonymously alert sexual partners and connect them to care.
- ePN has the potential to reduce STI rates and engage people at risk for HIV who may benefit from PrEP.
- Our objective was to investigate how the Massachusetts (MA) Department of Public Health could best design ePN to inform planned statewide implementation.

METHODS

- Study Design: Two cross-sectional online Discrete Choice Experiments (DCEs) hosted on Sawtooth Software™ from Nov 2024 to Oct 2025; 1) for index patients notifying partners (notifiers) and 2) for notification recipients (receivers).

To be acceptable to both notifiers and receivers of anonymous STI notifications, electronic partner notification should clearly describe the exposure, be Department of Public Health-branded, and allow flexibility for notifiers with different situations and comfort levels.

RESULTS

- 126 notifiers and 174 receivers completed surveys
- 67% notifiers and 69% receivers were non-Hispanic white
- 53% notifiers and 50% receivers reported prior STI
- 68% notifiers and 52% receivers recruited from clinical sites
- Notifiers strongly preferred ability to use ePN outside of medical appointments
- Receivers strongly preferred messages specifying time frame of exposure and name of STI

METHODS (cont.)

- Population: Men who have sex with men and transgender women recruited from partner clinics, community venues, and online sources via convenience sampling.
- Statistical Methods: Preference consistency was examined by race, ethnicity, STI history, and recruitment site using multinomial logit and hierarchical Bayes (HB) models.

CONCLUSION

- Notifiers strongly prefer using ePN outside of medical appointments.
- Receivers strongly prefer receiving a message specifying the exposure time frame and the name of the STI.
- Notifiers and receivers strongly prefer messages from MA Department of Public Health (vs. ePN vendor SXT).
- Results were generally consistent across all subgroups.

Table 1. Notifier Survey Attributes and Levels

User Anonymity	Default anonymous, but can choose to identify
	Always anonymous
User Verification	Provider sends a code to access platform at home
	Two-step verification using personal cell phone
How System Accessed	Outside of an appointment, on own time
	Start with provider, after appointment finish on own time
	During an appointment with provider
Message Delivery Source	Massachusetts Department of Public Health
	ePN provider, called SXT

Fig 1. Notifier Preference Weights (Logit Model)

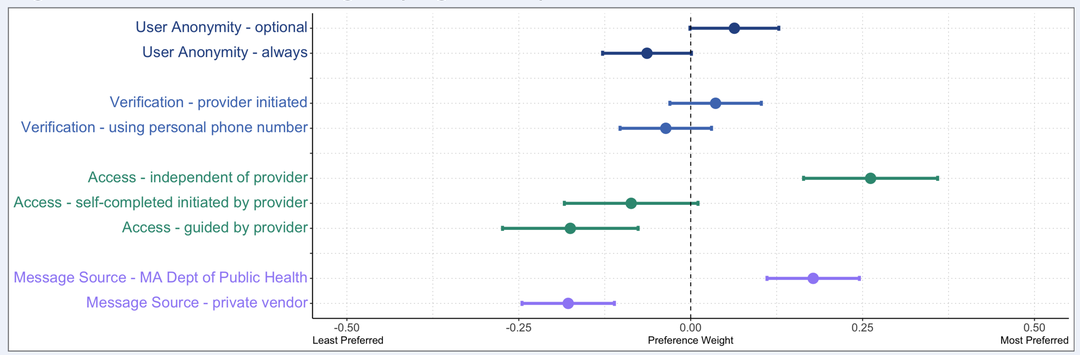


Fig 2. Notifier Attribute Importance (HB Model)

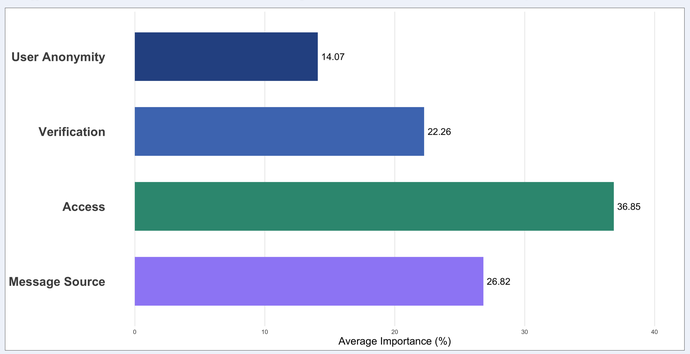


Table 2. Receiver Survey Attributes and Levels

Message Details About Exposure	Someone diagnosed with gonorrhea has named you a sex partner in the past 30 days
	Someone diagnosed with an STI has named you as a sex partner in past 30 days
	Someone with gonorrhea named you as a sex partner
	You may have been exposed to an STI
Message General Information about STIs	Infections are common and treatable; we wanted to give you information you need to take control of your health
	Clinicians can test and prescribe appropriate treatment
	Using link, you can learn more about signs, symptoms, treatment options, how/where to test, other resources
Message Next Steps	Please visit SXT website and enter the personalized code EPN1 to learn more about the infection and next steps
	Visit https://sxt.health/ to learn more about STIs
	Visit SXT website to learn more about this service and STI testing in the state.
Message Delivery Source	Massachusetts Department of Public Health
	ePN provider, called SXT

Fig 3. Receiver Preference Weights (Logit Model)

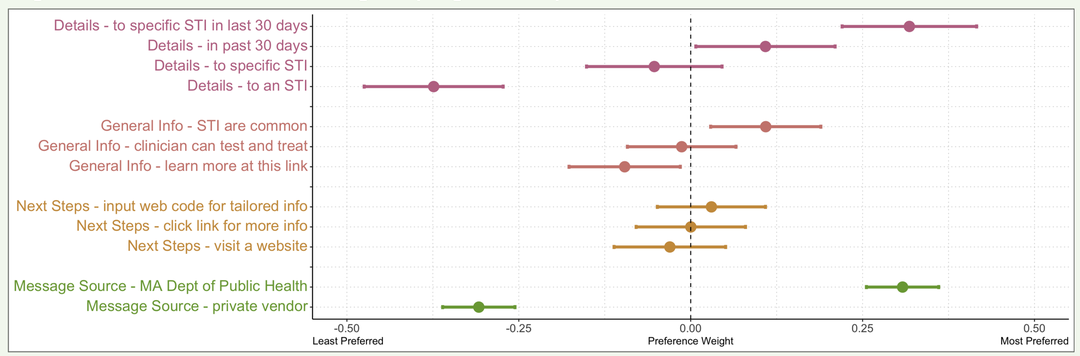
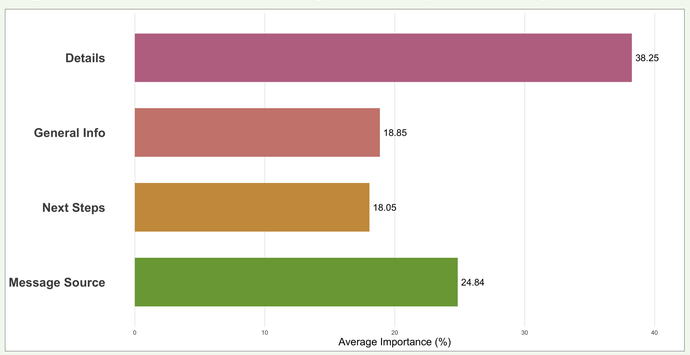


Fig 4. Receiver Attribute Importance (HB Model)



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