



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Public Health

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Director, Division of STD Prevention  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Center for HIV/Aids, Viral Hepatitis, STD & TB Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road NE, MS E-02  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Re: Letter of Invitation

The number of syphilis cases with ocular manifestations reported to the North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) increased nearly two-fold during the past year. In 2014, 18 cases of syphilis with ocular manifestations were reported, increasing to 32 so far in 2015. There also have been 2 cases of blindness attributed to ocular syphilis from North Carolina hospitals over the last several months. We are concerned both about the increase in number of cases as well as the severity of the visual symptoms reported.

The NC DPH, in collaboration with local health departments, plans to investigate cases through both a medical record review for syphilis case patients reported to have ocular manifestations to further classify the cases and identify potential risk factors, and by a brief interview of cases who can be contacted. To identify risk factors, data from these case patients will be compared to existing health department data on case patients with syphilis who presented without ocular symptoms.

We are requesting technical assistance from CDC to investigate the increase in ocular syphilis cases using the methods described above. The investigation team, which comprises CDC and state staff, will be under the direction of NC DPH.

The primary purpose of this investigation is to determine the burden of ocular syphilis, to determine if any risk factors require further investigation, and to recommend prevention and control measures. Data might be disseminated via publication and/or presentation. The state of North Carolina will retain ownership of all data collected. CDC might be asked to co-author publications or presentations to disseminate the data. CDC may not publish or present the data without prior approval and clearance from the state of North Carolina.

Sincerely,

Megan Davies, MD  
State Epidemiologist  
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

[www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov) • [www.publichealth.nc.gov](http://www.publichealth.nc.gov)  
Tel 919-733-7301 • Fax 919-733-1020

Location: 225 N. McDowell St • Raleigh, NC 27603  
Mailing Address: 1902 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-1902  
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