Introduction

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The global relevance and importance of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) has never been higher. Reported rates of infection are rising in many areas in the world. This is of concern not just because of the physical, psychological and economic impact of each STI individually, but also because other STIs also facilitate the spread of HIV.

The International Union against STIs (IUSTI) is a global organisation, with regional branches, concerned with the medical, scientific, social and public health aspects of STIs and their control. IUSTI works in partnership with the United Nations, including the World Health Organization, to achieve these goals. This IUSTI supplement provides first a snapshot of global sexual health with reports from different regions which highlight current STI challenges and what is being done to address them. Then there follows a series of papers which describe specific interventions that are being developed to reduce the burden of STIs and have potential application in a variety of geographical settings. These papers address prevention of STIs through public health policy, behavioural change or vaccination; improving diagnosis using new technologies; and better management by addressing antibiotic resistance, improving partner notification, using information technology and ensuring that partners receive appropriate treatment. These are all areas of rapid change and each paper attempts to describe how these interventions can be used to achieve their maximum impact within a 2 to 4-year time period.

To quote the author William Gibson ‘The future is here. It’s just not widely distributed yet.’ Many new technologies, tools and approaches for STI prevention and care may well be here, but the approaches to management and the interventions which have been proven to be of value need to be widely implemented effectively, efficiently and without delay.

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