

## Antivirus software?

Now available in BC: E-cards patients can use to notify sex partners to get tested

**T**housands of people are diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) every year in BC. It is important that their sex partners be tested and treated as well, in order to reduce the spread of infection. In BC, there are many ways patients with an STI can encourage their partners to get tested, including telling them directly, with the assistance of their primary care physician or other provider making the STI diagnosis, or through public health.

### inSPOT: A new resource for BC

inSPOT ([www.inspot.org](http://www.inspot.org)) is now available in BC for partner notification for people choosing to notify their partners themselves.<sup>1</sup> Developed in 2004 by Internet Sexuality Information Services, a San Francisco-based non-profit organization and subsequently implemented in numerous jurisdictions across North America (including Ottawa and Toronto), inSPOT lets people send electronic postcards (e-cards) to their sex partners to tell them that they should get tested for STIs, including HIV (**Figure**). The service is free, confidential, and easy to use. Visitors to the inSPOT website can select and send an e-card to up to six partners at a time, and senders have the options to remain anonymous and to include a personal message. Through the website, recipients of e-cards can use an interactive map of BC (or their postal code) to find a comprehensive and up-to-date list of STI and HIV testing locations in their area. Information on

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specific STIs and treatment, as well as community guidelines for respectful use of the site, are also available.

### What do we know?

Research from other places where inSPOT has been used has shown that inSPOT is a promising option for some people with STIs. In San Francisco, where inSPOT was first implemented and promoted, community surveys showed that up to 20% of gay men knew of the service, 2% to 4% had sent or received an e-card, and three-quarters said they would use the service to notify their sex partners.<sup>1</sup> Most people using the inSPOT service do include a personal message when sending e-cards, and the experience in other regions has been that complaints about inappropriate use of inSPOT are rare. We still have much to learn about how and with whom this service can best be used and promoted, and researchers at the BC Centre for Disease Control are working with public health partners elsewhere in Canada to answer some of these outstanding questions through various evaluation efforts.

### Implications for practice

inSPOT is not intended to replace but rather to supplement existing partner notification services in BC, for partners where their e-mail address is known. For your patients with a new diagnosis of an STI, it may be appropriate to discuss inSPOT as an option for partner notification in addition to other options such as notification through public health. inSPOT may also be helpful for STIs where partner notification is not routinely done in BC, such as for herpes or genital warts. Wallet cards describing inSPOT are



**Figure.** Example of e-card available on inSPOT website, [www.bccdc.ca/inSPOT](http://www.bccdc.ca/inSPOT).

available for use that can be given to patients when having these discussions.

### Contact us

If you would like to request free promotional materials (such as wallet cards or clinic posters), please contact us at [inspot@bccdc.ca](mailto:inspot@bccdc.ca). The BC portion of the inSPOT website is supported by the Online Sexual Health Services Program at the BC Centre for Disease Control. For further information about inSPOT in BC, see [www.bccdc.ca/inSPOT](http://www.bccdc.ca/inSPOT).

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### Reference

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