

# A Semester with the Check It Team

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For this past semester, I have been working as a research assistant on the Check It project. Check It is a free testing and treatment program for chlamydia and gonorrhea in black men aged 15-24 in New Orleans. Along with helping people by providing free and accessible treatment for chlamydia and gonorrhea, Check It strives to help people in the long run through meaningful research and the application of new knowledge.

One thing Check It is looking to research is Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT). Before working with Check It, I had never heard of EPT. EPT is a treatment option specifically for chlamydia where a diagnosed patient can get medication for their sex partners. Instead of their sex partners spending time, money, and resources to get themselves tested, diagnosed, and treated, patients can simply bring their sex partners medication. Check It offers EPT to the men who come through the program! However, not all of these men are willing to do EPT for their partners for a variety of reasons.

As a research assistant, I have been doing a literature search to find out what is known about EPT. The truth is... we don't know all that much. I have specifically been looking at patient perspectives on EPT to hopefully gain insight on how people feel about EPT and what their experiences with it have been. Some perceived pros of EPT include getting partners treated with ease and the financial benefits. Some perceived doubts about EPT include fear of telling a partner that they have been exposed to chlamydia and distrust of taking medication without direct instruction from a medical provider. Overall, patients seem willing to accept EPT and give their partners medication. At the end of the day, EPT is a great option but it is simply something that needs more research.

Check It aims to add to this research. Check It is performing interviews with men from the study. Once more interviews are completed and all of those interviews have been transcribed, we will begin analyzing the transcriptions to code for themes. I have been learning so much about qualitative research methods. This research practice has been so meaningful to my development as an undergraduate student.

I feel incredibly honored that I get to continue working with Check It all throughout the summer. There is still so much to learn.