

HIV-associated behaviors among men who have sex with men in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan statistical area: data from the 2011 National HIV/AIDS Behavioral Surveillance system

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Abstract

Background: There are over 48,100 new cases of HIV occurring each year. Sixty percent of new cases are attributable to the men who have sex with men (MSM) transmission group. Some risk factors for acquiring HIV infection among MSM include unprotected sex, drug use (especially when injected), and alcohol use. The purpose of this study is to examine the trends in HIV-associated behaviors among the MSM population within the Atlanta, GA metropolitan statistical area. These trends provide insight as to which behaviors to target for intervention as well as health promotion.

Methods: Data was obtained from an anonymous survey of MSM in the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area using the National HIV/AIDS Surveillance system in 2011. The current study used this data to analyze a variety of measures from 583 MSM participants aged 18 or older regarding HIV-related risk behaviors, testing behaviors, and prevention behaviors. Frequencies and percentages were computed to describe the sample population. In addition, chi-squared tests were conducted to test the difference between participants who self-reported as HIV-negative and those as HIV-negative.

Results: There was a fairly equal distribution in age among the sample population, with the racial profile being primarily white and black non-Hispanics. Chi-squared tests indicated significant differences between HIV-negative and HIV-positive participants among age, employment status, injection drug use, syphilis testing, and receiving the Hepatitis vaccines, among others. The prevalence of HIV infection in the sample population was estimated to be 26%, of which 37% were previously unaware of their status. Forty percent used a condom while 7.5% did not, were serodiscordant, and did not practice seropositioning.

Discussion: The demographic of the sample population reflected the national data of individuals living with HIV. Descriptive statistics of the sample demonstrate a need for education on pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis and seropositioning as preventative measures as well as a need for increasing hepatitis vaccine coverage. Chi-squared analyses indicate a need for further research on the differences in behavior among those self-identifying as HIV-negative in comparison to HIV-positive.