

RECENT TRENDS IN NEW DIAGNOSES OF HIV IN NSW RESIDENTS 2011-2015 WHO REPORT HETEROSEXUAL ACQUISITION OF HIV

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Background: From 2011 to 2015 1786 NSW residents were notified in NSW with newly diagnosed HIV infection; 81% (n=1451) of people diagnosed were men who have sex with men (MSM) and 15% (n=261) were people reporting heterosexual risk behaviour. While MSM are the main risk group targeted under testing and prevention efforts, heterosexual exposure is the next most common route of HIV acquisition. The number of heterosexual diagnoses has remained stable in recent years. A review of characteristics of newly diagnosed heterosexual people may identify factors to better address this risk group to help reach the goal of virtual elimination of HIV transmission in NSW by 2020.

Method: We conducted descriptive analysis of NSW HIV surveillance data among NSW residents newly diagnosed with HIV 2011 to 2015 and compared characteristics between heterosexually acquired diagnoses and those acquired by MSM.

Results: Compared to MSM, heterosexual people were more likely to be 39 years of age or older at diagnosis (49% compared with 35%) and less likely to have been born in Australia (37% compared with 58%). Heterosexual people were more likely to have been diagnosed late in infection (54% compared with 29% of MSM) irrespective of whether born in Australia (48% compared with 26%) or overseas (57% compared with 34%). Heterosexual people were more likely to have been diagnosed by a doctor inexperienced in the management of HIV than MSM (47% compared with 32%).

Conclusion: In NSW, heterosexual people are diagnosed with HIV later in life and later in their disease than MSM; they are often diagnosed by doctors who may not be fully equipped to manage someone newly diagnosed with HIV. Further investigation is needed to identify how to increase testing in heterosexual people at risk of HIV infection to enable earlier diagnosis and treatment.