

INJECTING DRUG USE IS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH RISK SEXUAL PRACTICES AND SEXUALLY TRANSMISSIBLE INFECTIONS AMONG GAY MEN: AN ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOURAL AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL DATA

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Introduction: Among gay men, drug use is associated with increased risk for acquiring sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Little is known, however, about injecting drug use among gay men, including if those who inject are at greater risk of infection. We analysed injecting drug use among gay men and explore its relationship to STIs.

Methods: Data were sourced from two national surveillance projects: an annual survey of gay men (Gay Community Periodic Survey [GCPS]) and a network of 44 Australian sexual health clinics (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance of STIs and BBVs [ACCESS]). Logistic regression was used to assess behavioural covariates of injecting among GCPS participants. In ACCESS sample, incidence of an STI infection (chlamydia, gonorrhoea, or infectious syphilis) was calculated annually using repeat testing; a Cox regression assessed incidence covariates.

Results: From 2007-2015, there were 65,617 GCPS participants and 64,618 gay men who attended ACCESS clinics, of which 2,938 (5%) and 2,266 (4%), respectively, reported injecting drug use. After controlling for demographic factors including HIV status, injecting drug use among GCPS participants was associated with condomless anal sex with casual partners (adjusted odds ratio=1.5, 95% confidence interval [CI]:1.1-2.0, p=0.009). In the ACCESS sample, after controlling for demographic and behavioural factors (condom use, partner numbers), injecting drug use was associated with STI incidence (hazard ratio=1.2, 95%CI:1.1-1.4, p=0.001). From 2007 to 2015, the incidence of STIs increased among gay men not reporting injecting (14.7-34.9, p<0.001) but was higher overall and increased to a greater degree among injecting drug users (20.0-74.4/100PY).

Conclusion: Injecting drug use is associated with high risk sexual practices among gay men and increased incidence of STIs. Given the nearly fourfold increase in STIs among gay men who inject, prevention campaigns targeting this population are urgently needed.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None to declare.