The emergence of undetectable viral load as a HIV risk reduction strategy by Australian gay and bisexual men who have condomless sex with casual partners

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Background

- Gay Community Periodic Surveys are repeated, community- (and online-) based behavioural surveillance of gay men
- Conducted in 7 states and territories
- Questions on deliberate use of non-condom-based HIV risk reduction strategies during condomless sex with casual partners included since 2011 – e.g. ‘I made sure we were the same HIV status before we fucked without a condom’
- This analysis looks at frequent use of different strategies by HIV status
- Abstracts includes 2013 data; this presentation is updated to focus on 2014 data plus change in last 2 yrs.

HIV risk reduction strategies

- Condoms
- Serosorting (matching HIV status) before anal sex without condoms
- Strategic positioning during anal sex without condoms with partner of unknown/discordant status
  - HIV-positive partner takes receptive position
  - HIV-negative partner takes insertive position
- Withdrawal before ejaculation during anal sex without condoms (unknown/discordant status partner)
- Undetectable viral load
  - HIV-positive participant knew he had an UVL before condomless sex
  - HIV-negative participant asked about UVL before condomless sex
- We classified participants as often/always or occasionally/never practising each strategy in the six months prior to survey (frequent vs. infrequent use)

Sample derivation (2014 GCPS data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIV-positive</th>
<th>HIV-negative</th>
<th>Untested/Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAIC past 6 mths</td>
<td>214 (41%)</td>
<td>1189 (21%)</td>
<td>312 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>5644</td>
<td>1114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men who had CAIC (n=1675) | HIV-positive | HIV-negative | Untested/Unknown | p value
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age</td>
<td>42 yrs</td>
<td>35 yrs</td>
<td>31 yrs</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Australian</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay-identified</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited at gay event or venue</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequently used strategies among men who had CAIC, by HIV status

- Condoms for anal intercourse
- Serosorting
- Strategic positioning
- Withdrawal
- Anti-HIV medication before/after sex
- Undetectable viral load
- At least one strategy
- At least two strategies

Frequent use of selected strategies, 2013-14

- HIV-positive UVL
- HIV-positive serosorting
- HIV-negative UVL
- HIV-negative serosorting

* p < 0.01
Summary

• 1 in 5 gay men have condomless sex with casual partners
  – 41% HIV-positive, 21% HIV-negative, 19% untested men
• 75% of men who have CAIC frequently practise HIV risk reduction
  – 90% HIV-positive, 78% HIV-negative, 43% untested men
• Most common strategies:
  – HIV-positive men: undetectable viral load (), serosorting
  – HIV-negative men: serosorting (), condoms
• Prevention priorities:
  – 25% of men who do not frequently reduce risk during CAIC
  – Promoting HIV testing to untested men who have CAIC
  – Shifting HIV-negative men from serosorting to PrEP?

Acknowledgments

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