

The meaning of “regular partner” amongst men who have sex with men, and the significance of “fuckbuddies”.

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INTRODUCTION

Fuckbuddies are generally a type of sexual partner with whom men have ongoing sexual contact, generally in the absence of social commitment.¹

Recent studies indicate that MSM often consider fuckbuddies to be a regular rather than a casual sexual partner,¹ and that MSM use condoms less consistently with fuckbuddies than with casual partners.² This potentially makes fuckbuddy partnerships an important risk factor for HIV and STI transmission.

AIM

To determine the frequency of fuckbuddy partnerships amongst sexual health clinic attendees, and assess the sexual risk and rate of STIs in those with fuckbuddies.

METHODS

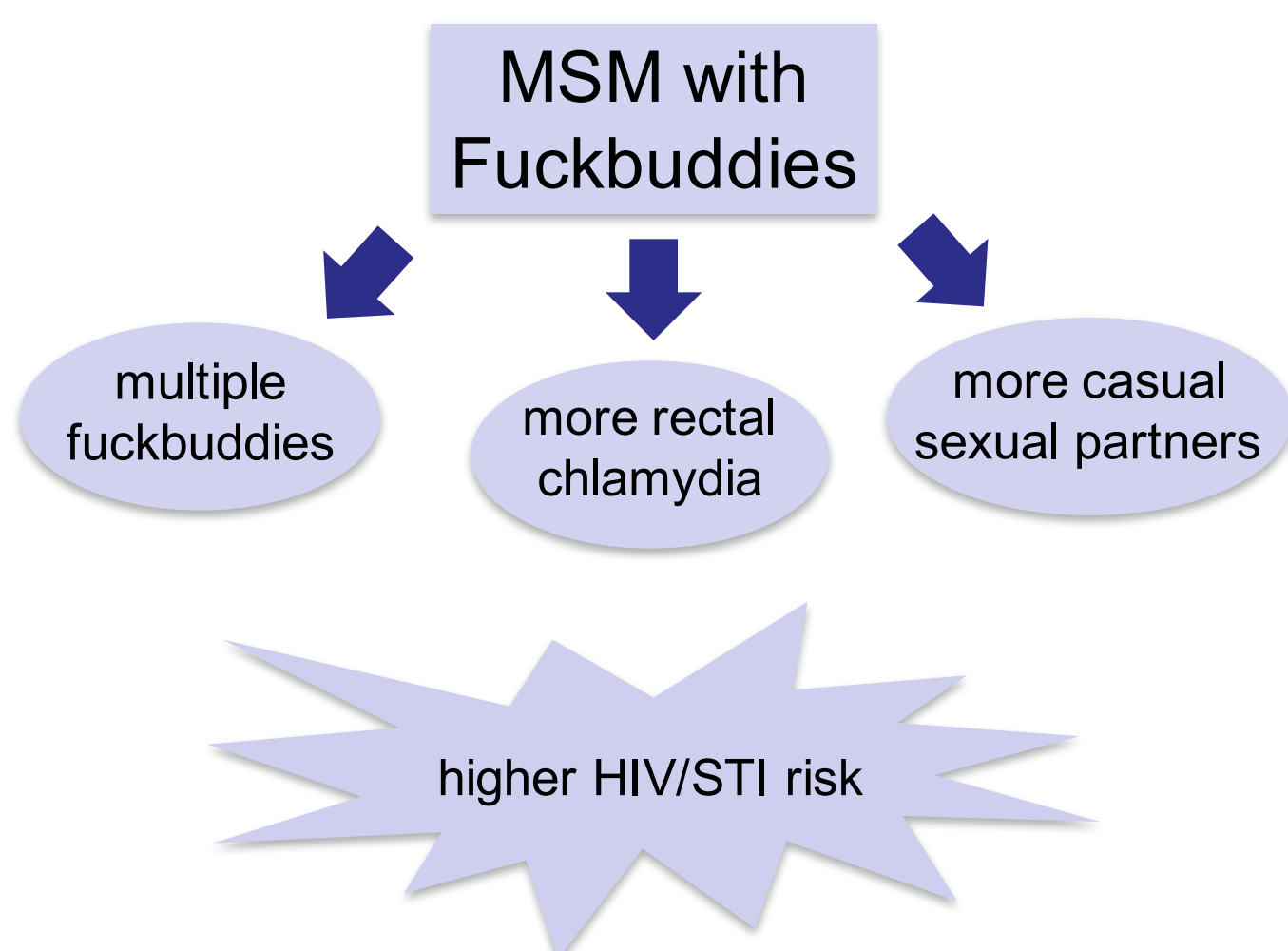
- From March to September 2015, all MSM attended who MSHC were asked to categorise their regular partners as either (a) fuckbuddy, (b) boyfriend, (c) partner, (d) husband, or (e) other; and quantify each type of partnership for the preceding three months.
- We analysed associations between the types of regular partners and age, condom use, the number of casual partners, and STI positivity.
- Ethical approval was obtained from the Alfred Hospital Ethics Committee (Nr 544/14).

RESULTS

- Of the 945 MSM surveyed, 503 had at least one regular partner, and reported a total of 1139 regular partnerships, consisting of fuckbuddies (59.7%), boyfriends (15.6%), partners (16.2%), husbands (1.1%) and “other” (7.3%).
- Of the 503 MSM with at least one regular partner, 52.5% (95% CI 50-56) had a fuckbuddy, of whom 62.9% (95% CI 57-69) had more than one fuckbuddy, and those with fuckbuddies reported a median of two fuckbuddies (IQR 1 to 3).
- MSM with regular fuckbuddies were more likely to also have casual sexual partners: 87.6% (95% CI 83.0 to 91.4) of those with fuckbuddies, and 56.8% (95% CI 50.2 to 63.3) of those without fuckbuddies (odds ratio (OR) 5.7; 95% CI 3.6 to 8.9)
- MSM with fuckbuddies had more casual sexual partners than MSM without fuckbuddies (median 4 vs 3, $p < 0.001$).
- MSM with fuckbuddies were more likely to have rectal chlamydia than MSM without fuckbuddies (12.4% vs 6.2%; adjusted* OR 2.6; $p = 0.002$).
* Adjusted for other types of regular sexual partners, casual sexual partners, and condom use.

CONCLUSIONS

- Our findings suggest that MSM with fuckbuddies are at particular risk of sexually transmitted infections.
- Incident HIV diagnoses were too few to be able to directly assess whether fuckbuddies are a risk factor for HIV transmission. However, rectal chlamydia is a marker of receptive anal sex without condoms, and hence thought to be a risk factor for HIV acquisition. We found a strong association between having fuckbuddies and having rectal chlamydia.
- We suggest that clinicians should specifically ask about fuckbuddy partnerships as part of their risk assessment during patient interviews, as these patients may benefit from HIV prevention strategies such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).



REFERENCES

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