

Are HIV Seroincidence Rates Among Gay Men in Vancouver Increasing? Here Is One Excellent Reason Not to Care.

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Background

- Substantial attention continues to be paid annually to trends in seroincidence rates in cohorts of men who have sex with men (MSM) despite the fact that extraordinarily large sample sizes are required to discern statistically significant temporal shifts.
- Nevertheless, demonstration of persistently high HIV seroincidence in identifiable subgroups of MSM warrants a targeted, preventive response *regardless of such overall trends*.

Objective

- To identify high-risk subgroups of young MSM for targeted, preventive interventions.

Methods

- The Vanguard Project is a prospective study of HIV-1 seroincidence and behavioral risk factors among MSM < 35 years old at enrollment
- Two self-administered, cross-sectional surveys were performed in 2001-2003
- Questionnaires assessed unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) during the previous year by partner HIV serostatus and by sexual position (insertive vs receptive).
- Male injection drug users and prevalent HIV+ MSM were excluded from these analyses

Results

Sample Description

410 HIV-seronegative participants:

- age 29 ± 5 years
- time in the study 4 ± 2 years
- 67% were white, 12% Aboriginal
- 56% were employed full-time
- 89% completed high school

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During 2001-2, 18 men (5%) reported no sex during the previous year and 27 (8%) reported sexual activity without anal intercourse. The other 300 men (87%) distributed with respect to type of anal intercourse during the previous year and partner sero-discordance as follows; numbers of seroconverters (n = 5) are shown in parentheses:

Table 1: Sexual behaviour reported in 2001 and 2002 (Wave 7)

	Insertive Only	Receptive Only	Both Insertive and Receptive	Total Participants
Anal Intercourse	48	25	227 (1)	300
Any UAI	42	30	131	203
Serodiscordant UAI*	22	11 (1)	34 (2)	67

* Unprotected anal intercourse with a partner whose HIV serostatus is + or unknown

(The fifth seroconverter, a former injecting drug user, reported no sexual activity during the previous year.)

During 2002-3, 21 men (7%) reported no sex during the previous year and 28 (10%) reported sexual activity without anal intercourse. The other 234 men (83%) distributed with respect to type of anal intercourse during the previous year and partner sero-discordance as follows; numbers of seroconverters (n = 4) are shown in parentheses:

Table 2: Sexual behaviour reported in 2002 and 2003 (Wave 8)

	Insertive Only	Receptive Only	Both Insertive and Receptive	Total Participants
Anal Intercourse	34	21	179 (1)	234
Any UAI	35	26	112 (1)	173
Serodiscordant UAI*	28	12	24 (2)	64

* Unprotected anal intercourse with a partner whose HIV serostatus is + or unknown

Conclusions

- In our setting, the majority of HIV-negative MSM who engage in UAI reportedly do so with HIV-negative partners.
- Receptive UAI with partners whose HIV status is positive or unknown was reported by only 12% of HIV-negative MSM. HIV seroconversions are heavily concentrated in this minority of MSM, with annualized rates of approximately 5-6%.
- Aggressive, targeted interventions for this extraordinarily high-risk minority of men appear warranted, regardless of trends in overall incidence in Vancouver.