



Self-Reported Sexual Risk-Behaviors among HIV Infected Patients Attending Four New York City HIV Clinics

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Background: Measuring behavioral risk among persons infected with HIV provides valuable information for program planning to prevent secondary transmission or re-infection with another strain.

Methods: Cross-sectional anonymous surveys of HIV infected patients receiving antiretroviral treatment at four hospital-based HIV primary care clinics in New York City. Information on sexual risk behaviors was collected through an audio-computer assisted self interview. Sexual activity was defined as a partner in the past 12 months. Sexual risk was defined as unprotected vaginal or anal sex with a partner.

Results: Mean age of the 1,106 enrolled patients was 46 years (range 21-72), 43.2% were female, 40.7% Black, and 35.9% Latino. Mean duration of HIV infection was 9.8 years (range 0-21); 95% CI = 9.5-10.2). 752 (69%) of the participants reported being sexually active. 41% of sexually active patients were females who reported having a male partner. 31% of 445 sexually active males reported having had sex with another man (MSM). Among persons who reported having a partner of the opposite sex, more females than males reported unprotected sex (47% vs 38%, p<0.05). Of males reporting unprotected sex 37% had an HIV negative female partner. Of the MSM, 37% reported unprotected sex, of whom 48% had an HIV negative partner. A low proportion of sexually active persons reported exchanging money or drugs for sex (0%), of which 56% reported unprotected sex. Among females, reasons for non-condom use during vaginal sex with main partner included partner not wanting to use condoms (20%), partner being HIV positive (13%), and condoms interfering with sexual pleasure (12%). Among males reporting non-condom use during vaginal sex with main partner reasons cited were: partner was HIV positive (19%), condoms interfering with sexual pleasure (15%), and non-availability of condoms (13%). Among MSM reasons for non-condom use during insertive or receptive anal sex with a main or casual partner included: condoms interfering with sexual pleasure (18%), and partner was HIV positive (18%), and partner not wanting to use condoms (16%).

Conclusion: In this sample of long-term HIV infected patients in care a high proportion were sexually active. Self-reported unprotected sex was more frequent among females compared to males. Clinic-based intervention programs that address the variety of reasons for non-condom use, should be developed to prevent secondary transmission and re-infection.

Definitions

MSM – men having sex with men
MSW – men having sex with women
WSM – women having sex with men

Sexually Active = ≥ 1 partner in 12 months

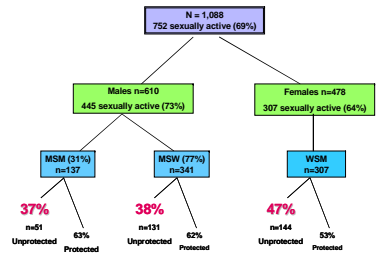
Sexual Risk = non-condom use during anal or vaginal sex

IDU = injection drug use

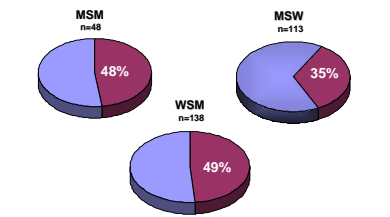
Demographics

	TOTAL (N=1,106)	TOTAL (N=1,106)
Gender (%)		
Male	55	
Female	43	
Other	2	
Race/Ethnicity (%)		
White	4	
Black	41	
Hispanic	36	
Other/Unknown	20	
Age (%)		
18 - 29	2	
30 - 34	6	
35 - 39	13	
40 - 44	24	
45 - 49	24	
50 - 54	13	
55+	13	
Education Level		
College Grad	8	
Some College	19	
H.S. Grad/GED	33	
Some H.S.	27	
Less Than H.S.	12	
Refuse/DK	<1	
Sexual Preference		
Heterosexual	74	
Homosexual	12	
Bisexual	8	
Other	5	
Refuse/DK	1	

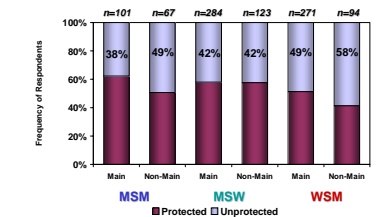
Self-Reported Sexual Risk Behavior Over Past 12 Months



Serodiscordant Partners Among Those Having Unprotected Sex During Last Sexual Encounter



Unprotected Sex in Main versus Non-main Partners During Past 12 months



Reasons for Unprotected Sex

Main

- MSM partner didn't want to (16%), interferes with sexual pleasure (13%), partner was HIV+ (13%)
- MSW partner was HIV+ (18%), unavailability of condoms (13%), interferes with sexual pleasure (13%)
- WSM interferes with sexual pleasure (20%), partner was HIV+ (13%), hard to practice safe sex (13%)

Non-Main

- interferes with sexual pleasure (18%), partner was HIV+ (18%), partner didn't want to (15%)
- drunk or high (13%), interferes with sexual pleasure (13%), unavailability of condoms (13%)
- partner didn't want to (20%), interferes with sexual pleasure (16%), unavailability of condoms (13%)

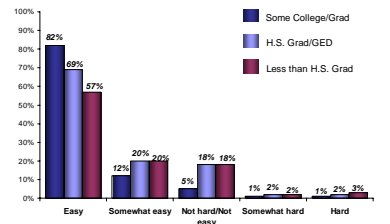
Exchange for Sex

- 6% (48/752) had sex in exchange for money, drugs, food, shelter or transportation (36 Males, 12 Females).
- During the exchange for sex, the majority of MSW report paying for sex (79%) while the majority of WSM report being paid for sex (83%).
- 56% (27/48) report unprotected sex with partners of unknown serostatus.

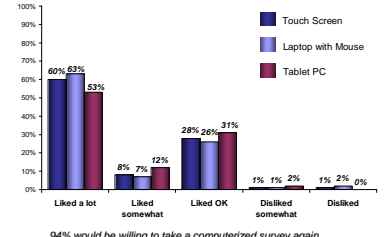
% Drug Use Among the Sexually Active

	Men having sex with men (n=137)	Men having sex with women (n=341)	Women having sex with men (n=307)	TOTAL (N=782)
Injecting Drug Use				
Ever Injected	12	48	24	32
Injected within past 12 months	5	9	4	6
Non-Injecting Drugs used within past 12 months	33	27	19	24
Non-Injecting Drug used during sex	20	16	10	15
Types of Non-Injecting Drugs Used During Sex				
Marijuana	10	6	5	7
Cocack	9	9	5	7
Cocaine	4	4	1	3
Heroin	0.7	6	2	3
Poppers	6	0.3	0	1
Pain Killers	1	1	1	1
Dowies	0.7	1	0.3	0.7
Cygnal	3	0	0	0.5
Ecstasy	2	0	0	0.4
Club Drugs	1	0	0	0.3
Amphetamines	0	0	0.3	0.1

Ease of Using the Computer



Acceptability of Taking a Computerized Survey



Limitations

- Due to the selection of inner city hospital-based HIV clinics, some subgroups of HIV+ patients are under-represented such as MSM and whites.
- Using a computerized survey for data collection eliminates the ability to identify missing data at the time of administration of the survey.
- Although the literature suggests that use of computer-assisted surveys may yield more accurate reporting of risk behaviors, this study was unable to assess this due to absence of interviewer administered surveys among this sample as a comparison.

Summary

- In 752 sexually active HIV+ patients, women were 1.4 times more likely to report unprotected sex than men over the past 12 month (p<0.05).
- Among persons reporting unprotected sex with partners of the opposite sex (MSW, WSM), a higher proportion of women reported having a serodiscordant partner (49% vs 35%; p<0.05) than men.
- Among MSW, the most common reason reported for unprotected sex with a main partner was that their partner was HIV+.
- Among women, the primary reason for non-condom use during vaginal sex was because their partner didn't want to.
- Among MSM, similar reasons for non-condom use include partner didn't want to, interferes with sexual pleasure, and partner was HIV+.
- Reported general use of non-injection drugs over the past 12 months among the sexually active was 24% and reported use during sex was 15%.
- The computer-assisted survey is feasible. The majority of respondents reported that they liked taking a computerized survey, that it was not difficult, and that they would be willing to take it again.
- Computer-assisted systems allow for efficient data collection, standardized administration of the survey, and further ensures anonymity of responses.

Conclusions

- Based on these results, ongoing prevention efforts are needed to promote and maintain reduced risk behaviors.
- HIV primary care clinics serve as a key access point for implementing targeted prevention efforts aimed at reducing sexual and drug-using risk behaviors and thereby reducing risk of transmission.
- Use of a computer-assisted survey provides a more anonymous setting and standardized approach for collection of sensitive sexual and drug-using behaviors.

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Sample Question on Computer Screen

What sex do you identify yourself as now?

Male
 Female
 Transgender
 Other