SELF REPORTED HIV TESTING BEHAVIOUR IN SOUTH AFRICAN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (MSM) IN AN INTERNET BASED SURVEY

Hugo JM¹, Stall RD², Rebe K¹,³, De Swardt G¹, Struthers H¹, McIntyre JA¹,⁴

1. Anova Health Institute, Health4Men, South Africa.
2. University of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Public Health, Pittsburgh, US.
3. Department of Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.
4. School of Public Health & Family Medicine, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.

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Corresponding author details: Dr. Johan Hugo
hugo@anovahealth.co.za
+2721 447 2844

INTRODUCTION

There has been an explosive HIV epidemic in South Africa (SA) that has reached extraordinarily high rates among MSM¹. High community viral loads as a result of unknown positives and positives not in care are still driving the HIV epidemic in SA². Stigma after all these years is still one of the biggest barriers to HIV testing and MSM also face stigma due to their sexual behaviour². HIV testing often represents an entry point to sexual health care and the objective is to look at self reported HIV testing behaviour in South African MSM⁴.

METHODS

We initiated a cross-sectional, internet-based survey to measure the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs regarding Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) among South African MSM. The survey included questions about HIV testing behaviours. The survey will continue sampling until there are 1000 completed surveys.

RESULTS

302 participants have completed the survey to date. 95/302 (31.5%) are black, 149 (49.3%) white, 45 (14.9%) mixed race and 13 (4.3%) of other ethnic origin.

22 participants (7.3%) have never had an HIV test before, 127 (42.1%) participants tested within the last 6 months, 60 (19.9%) participants tested within the last 6 to 12 months and 92 (30.5%) participants tested more than a year ago.

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78 (27.9%) participants who tested previously self tested more than a year ago.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These provisional findings suggest that a considerable proportion of online surveyed MSM have been tested previously for HIV. Of those who tested, a significant proportion had not tested recently. This indicates a need for education and programmes to promote repeat HIV testing for at-risk MSM.

References: