

Understanding high-risk MSM never-testers for public health control of HIV

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Background

The approach to expand HIV testing among high-risk men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) for early diagnosis is explored for setting of HIV prevention strategy.

Methods

Data on HIV-positive MSM under care in the largest HIV clinic in Hong Kong was reviewed. Logistic regression was used to identify factors associated with having been diagnosed at the first HIV test.

Results

Among 1475 HIV-positive MSM (89.7% Chinese, mean age 34 years) newly engaged in medical care from 2006 to 2016, 505 (34.2%) were diagnosed upon their first HIV test, i.e. never-testers. The median CD4 count at the time of HIV diagnosis was 370/uL and 284/uL among ever-testers with prior HIV negative tests and never-testers respectively.

As compared with the ever-testers, HIV-positive MSM who were diagnosed upon their first HIV test were of lower education level (39% versus 63% with tertiary education level, $p=0.000$). More of them had resided in Hong Kong for over 7 years (92% versus 85%, $p=0.037$).

Multivariate analysis revealed that never-testers were less likely to perceive themselves as having high risk of HIV infection (OR 0.32, 95% CI 0.19-0.53, $p=0.000$), and to be aware of the HIV status of their regular partners or spouse (OR 0.66, 95% CI 0.47-0.91, $p=0.013$). They were also more likely to have had their first HIV tests performed because of HIV-related symptoms (OR 1.68, 95% CI 1.06 – 2.67, $p=0.03$) rather than screening due to behavioral risk.

Conclusions

Promotion on HIV awareness and early testing shall be strengthened for local young MSM with lower education level.

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