Finding Unawares: High Levels of Undiagnosed HIV Infection among Moscow Men Who Have Sex with Men

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INTRODUCTION

- HIV testing, early identification of HIV infection, and linkage to care are critical to improving morbidity and mortality, and reducing risk of onward HIV transmission
- Little is known about HIV testing among gay, bisexual and other MSM in Russia.
- Public sector testing is named based, and many MSM opt out of the system.
- New policies and laws may further restrict MSM from seeking HIV services.
- HIV prevalence, testing history, undiagnosed HIV infection and risks were investigated in an anonymous MSM-friendly clinic in Moscow City.

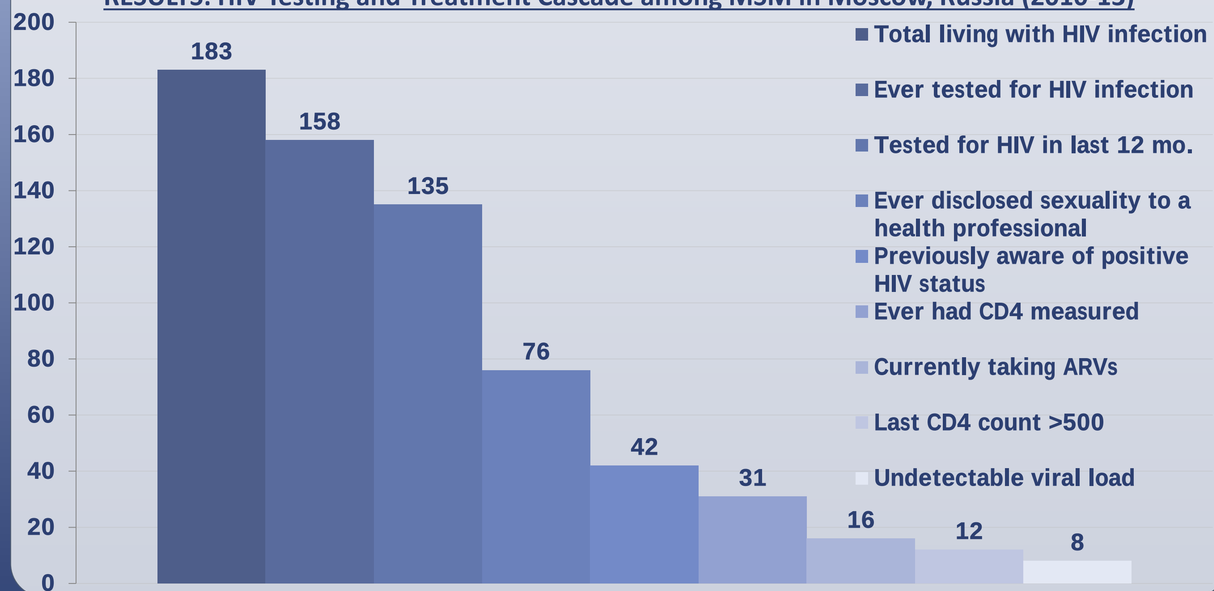
METHODS

- From October 2010 to April 2013, MSM were recruited and enrolled via respondent driven sampling (RDS).
- Activities were conducted in SANAM, a non-governmental, MSM-friendly clinic
- Participants completed an interviewer administered survey
- Rapid HIV testing and confirmatory HIV tests were provided, but not required for study participation
- CD4 count and viral load measures were self-reported
- We investigated the HIV treatment cascade among 183 MSM who tested positive by confirmatory or rapid HIV test (n = 178) or who reported a previous diagnosis of HIV infection (n=5)
- Participants characteristics and proportion of previously undiagnosed HIV infections were explored.
- Participant characteristics were not weighted for RDS

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS (n=1375)

	n	%
Median age years (range)	30	18-7
Born in Russia	1163	84.6
Unemployed (n=1369)	72	5.3
Ever married (to a woman; n=1367)	240	17.6
Sexual Identity (n=1347)		
Heterosexual	26	1.9
Homosexual	741	55.1
Bisexual	577	42.9
Gender(s) of sex partner(s) (past 12mo.; n=1366)		
Only men	877	64.2
Both men and women	480	35.1
Ever disclosed sexual practices/identity (n=1357)	1079	79.6
Sold sex (past 12mo.; n=1327)	264	19.9
Purchased sex from another man (past 12 mo. n=1330)	246	18.5
Consistent condom use during anal sex** (n=1354)	844	62.3
Consistent condom use during vaginal sex** (n=438)	186	42.5
Substance use during sex (n=1328)		
Alcohol only	875	65.9
Drugs only (including poppers)	36	2.7
Both alcohol and drugs (including poppers)	150	11.3
None	267	20.1
Drug use (last 12mo.; n=1364)	399	29.3

RESULTS: HIV Testing and Treatment Cascade among MSM in Moscow, Russia (2010-13)



RESULTS

- Sexual risks included inconsistent condom use, sex work, or purchasing sex
- The majority of participants reported a lifetime history of HIV testing (85.5%) and 91.6% of those had received the result.
- The unweighted HIV prevalence among participants completing confirmatory HIV testing was 12.3%
- 41.5% of MSM living with HIV had ever disclosed their sexual risk to a health provider
- Among those with HIV, 77.1% had undiagnosed infection.
- Only 8.7% (16/183) of MSM with HIV infection were on ART.

CONCLUSIONS

- Anonymous and safe HIV testing are sought by Moscow-based MSM
- A high proportion of men living with HIV are unaware of their HIV infection status
- The proportion of MSM living with HIV who are on ARVs is very low – only 8% are currently receiving treatment
- Even fewer have obtained undetectable viral loads
- These findings have implications for public health programming and clinical care.

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