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Assessing Perspectives Among People with HIV Who Have Undergone High Resolution Anoscopy for Anal Cancer Screening

Maria C Geba[1], Divya D Kalluri[1], Benjamin F Cardenas[2], Emma M Mitchell[3], Tabor E Flickinger[4], Rebecca A Dillingham[2], Tania A Thomas[2]

[1]Division of Infectious Diseases and International Health, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, United States, [2]University of Virginia School of Medicine, Charlottesville, VA, United States, [3]University of Virginia School of Nursing, Charlottesville, VA, United States, [4]Division of General Medicine, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, United States

BACKGROUND

- Anal cancer, caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), disproportionately affects people with HIV (PWH).
- **We sought to understand factors that influence decision making in people considering anal cancer screening procedures.**

Our multidisciplinary team in the anal cancer screening clinic:

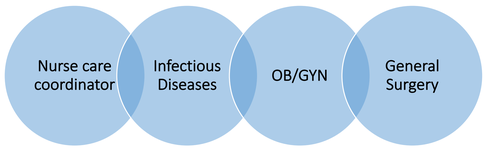
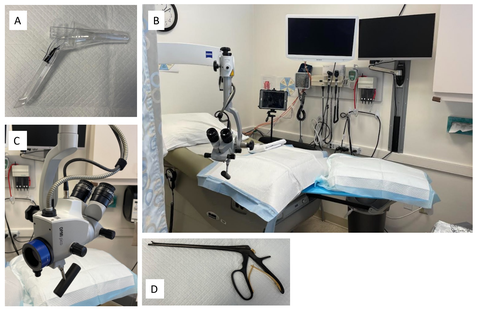


Figure 1: A. Anoscope. B. HRA clinic set up with exam table, tablet for patient entertainment, colposcope with two screens for image viewing. C. Colposcope. D. Forceps to obtain biopsies.



METHODOLOGY

- **Semi-structured remote qualitative interviews with participants:**
  - ≥ 35 years old, receiving HIV care
  - Underwent HRA in clinic or OR
- Interview questions structured using the **health belief model** and reviewed by a panel of patient advocates

Figure 2: Ten people of a representative population completed an interview. This population included women, men who have sex with men (MSM), men who have sex with women (MSW) and transgender women who have sex with men. Major themes listed below.

PERCEIVED MOTIVATORS

Perceived Benefits

Invested in healthy living
Positive attitudes towards preventative care
Trust in clinic staff

Perceived Personal Risk

HIV
Comorbidities
Family history of cancer
Sexual practices
Age
Smoking
HPV positivity
Abnormal anal Pap

"Everything that my doctors tell me I should do to further my health better, I do it. He's the one who cares, and he wants to make sure that...I get to stay healthier. With everything going on, [I want to] stay healthy."

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Perceived lack of risk
- Older age
- Currently abstinent

Fear of cancer diagnosis
Stigma
- Cancer
- Sexual practices
- Private area
- HPV associated with infidelity

Invasive
Prior sexual trauma
Misconceptions
- Confusion with other cancer screening
- Association of HPV with teen health
- Association of anal cancer with anal sex/MSM

Experience with HRA

During procedure:
- Visualization of HRA
- Discomfort giving sexual history
- Pain/discomfort

Post-procedure:
- Inconclusive results
- Bleeding
- Incontinence
- Pain

"The only problem I have with [HRAs] is that I've been raped before and so I've got a really bad PTSD about being exposed...especially if they're going to take a probe up in there...it has caused me quite a bit of trauma."

PERCEIVED FACILITATORS

Job flexibility
Reliable transportation
Insurance coverage
Preferred mode of collection
- Self-/clinician-collected

Bundled visits
Gender of provider
Faith/spirituality
Awareness about HPV
Preferred source of medical information
- Mobile platform
- HIV provider
- Pamphlet/flyers
- Email

Experience with HRA

Pre-medicating
Entertainment during procedure
Prep materials prior to procedure
Tolerable pain

"They sent that video link, so they can kind of walk you through the process beforehand. So that was that was helpful overall."

CONCLUSIONS

Our results have shed light on important factors involved in decision making regarding anal cancer screening services.

- Our clinic will **continue** to offer:
  - Pre-medication for HRAs
  - Pre-procedural education materials and phone calls with nurse coordinator
  - Entertainment during HRAs
  - Bundling procedures with other clinic visits
- Our clinic will work on **adding**:
  - Anticipatory guidance on post-procedural bleeding/pain
  - Pamphlets/flyers to increase awareness of anal cancer and HPV

NEXT STEPS

- Conduct prospective qualitative studies to better identify and characterize post-HRA complications (i.e. bleeding, pain)
- Elicit HIV provider perspectives to understand barriers to implementing anal cancer screening services

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