EMERGING HIV EPIDEMIC AMONG MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN IN GEORGIA – COMPARISON WITH A EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE

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Background

• Estimated HIV prevalence in Georgia is 0.4% among the adult population
• There is annual increase of new infections and HIV cases attributed to homosexual transmission are rapidly increasing in Georgia
• The study aimed to compare recent Georgian trends with data from the European countries
Methods

- A cross sectional, anonymous surveys using respondent driven sampling was conducted in the capital city of Georgia Tbilisi in 2010 and 2015.
- MSM aged ≥18 years and having homosexual contact during last year were recruited. Face-to-face interviewing and voluntary blood testing on HIV were done. Blood samples were collected from 271 (2010) and 300 (2015) MSM.
- The study protocols were approved by the Ethical Committee of HIV/AIDS Patients Support Foundation.
- Data were analysed with the RDSAT 7.1 software.
- European CDC data were consulted to draw comparison of Georgia data with European countries.
Results (1)

• Several key indicators such as coverage with preventive interventions, knowledge about HIV infection, HIV testing uptake and awareness about HIV testing possibilities improved for the period 2010-2015.

• However, condom use at last anal intercourse did not change for the same period and about 40% of MSM practice unprotected sex.
### Results (2)

## MSM key indicators during 2010-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coverage by preventive intervention</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about HIV infection</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV testing during last year</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about HIV testing possibilities</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condom use at last anal intercourse</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>p &gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results (3)

- The 2015 study found 25.1% HIV prevalence rate among MSM population in the capital city.
- A three-fold increase is observed from 2010 with a higher concentration among older (<25) age group.

HIV prevalence rates among MSM in 2010, 2015, Tbilisi, Georgia
(sample sizes 271 and 300 respectively)
Conclusion

- HIV diagnosis in MSM is increasing annually in Western and Eastern Europe. Reported cases among MSM has increased by 33% for the period 2004-2013. Sex between men account for majority of cases diagnosed in 2014 (42%) and is increasing (European CDC, 2014). This is the only key population with no decline in new infections.
- Despite improving certain programmatic parameters, HIV epidemic continues to unfold among MSM population.
- Georgia follows the European pattern, suggesting that current prevention efforts are not having necessary impact and there is a need for reframing programmatic efforts tailored to new realities.

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