

ABSTRACT

The Prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Infections among Persons Living with HIV attending the STI Clinic in Trinidad

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Background: The presence of a STI among persons living with HIV (PLHIV) facilitates sexual transmission of HIV and suggests a breakdown of safe sex practice. This study assesses the STI prevalence and risk factors among PLHIV who attend the Queen's Park Counselling Centre and Clinic, which is the main STI Clinic in Trinidad with branches in the north and south of the island.

Design and Methods: A cross-sectional study of STI prevalence among PLHIV attending the Queens Park Counseling Centre and Clinics was conducted during April-September 2014. A questionnaire was administered to obtain socio-demographic data and risk factors for STI infections. A physical examination was done and patients screened for STIs including clinical examination for genital warts; standard laboratory tests for trichomoniasis, bacterial vaginosis, herpes simplex, syphilis and HIV; and nucleic acid amplification tests for chlamydia and gonorrhoea. Data were analysed using SPSS version 22 and factors significantly associated with the presence of a STI were assessed using multiple logistic regression.

Results: A total of 210 HIV infected patients (138 males [65.7%] and 72 females [34.3%]) were enrolled; age range 17-68 years, mean age 36.4 years. Of these, 68 (32.4%) were newly HIV diagnosed and 142 (67.6%) had a known history of HIV infection. Seventy-eight (37.1%) of the 210 patients were concurrently diagnosed with a STI. Risk factors for STIs included male sex (OR, 2.46; 95% CI, 1.06-5.73), homosexual/bisexual sexual orientation (OR, 2.26; 95% CI, 1.06-4.80) and multiple sex partners within the past 12 months (OR, 1.99; 95% CI, 1.03-3.86). The most common STIs included syphilis (VDRL, TPPA confirmed) - 44 (21.0%), genital warts (exam) - 17 (8.1%), *Chlamydia trachomatis* (NAAT) - 12 (5.9%), herpes genitalis (Tzanck smear) - 11 (5.2%) and gonorrhoea (NAAT) - 5 (2.4%).

Conclusion: The STI prevalence was high among PLHIV attending the STI Clinic in Trinidad. Targeted interventions among PLHIV including routine STI screening, comprehensive STI management and prevention strategies for HIV positives are urgently needed.

Keywords: Robert Jeffrey Edwards; Queen's Park Counselling Centre and Clinic; persons living with HIV; sexual transmission of HIV; STI prevalence; HIV prevention; targeted interventions; Trinidad.