

Victorian Primary Care Network for Sentinel Surveillance on BBVs and STIs*

HIV Network Report 2

January - June 2007

We are pleased to present the second report in this series.

This six monthly report presents information on trends and patterns in HIV in Victoria, with a particular focus on the findings from a sentinel surveillance network established with the collaboration of a number of primary health and sexual health clinics. Each issue includes standard tabulations from the sentinel surveillance network and features updates from other surveillance systems of relevance to HIV, as new information comes to hand. The surveillance network facilitates further insight into trends in annual HIV diagnoses in Victoria, particularly in men who have sex with men (MSM). The sentinel surveillance network provides information about HIV testing and prevalence among those tested, complementing other data sources.

Sentinel Surveillance for HIV

Method: Since March 2006 a sentinel surveillance system has been operational in Victoria. Five clinics (listed on page 2) participate in the system (sexual health clinics=2, gay men's health clinics=3); all have a high case load of MSM and diagnose a high number of HIV infections per year. The system involves linking two data sets (i) demographic and HIV testing data from pathology providers of the clinics, and (ii) demographic and behavioural information collected using a sentinel surveillance form. Doctors complete the top part of the form, which serves as a HIV request form, in all individuals tested (demographics, testing history and risk group) and MSM patients' voluntarily complete the bottom part of the form (risk behaviour information). Two sites did not use the form; one already had a computer-assisted medical record system which collected briefer patient behavioural information, the other allowed access to laboratory HIV testing data, however not all tests were captured in the data extraction and results for the testing site are not provided. This report provides HIV sentinel surveillance results for the period January 2007 to June 2007 and focuses on MSM. Individuals who had previously tested positive for HIV and were recorded as being tested for confirmatory reasons were excluded.

Results – Tests: Between January and June 2007, a total of 5406 HIV tests were conducted in individuals at the four participating sites; 3868 (68%) among males. At sexual health clinics, 4048 tests were conducted and close to two thirds were in males (58%) compared to gay men's health clinics where 1358 tests were undertaken and the majority were in males (92%) (Table 1). In males, the overall questionnaire response rate was 96%, and varied by site from 70% to 100% (Table 1).

Results - MSM: A total of 2050 questionnaires were completed among MSM; with a mean of 342 (range: 283-

389) per month (Figure 1) compared with 300 (range: 276-334) per month in the previous report (Apr-Dec06). Among MSM surveyed, around two thirds (68%) were aged 20 to 39 years and around a third (31%) reported a negative HIV test in the 12 months prior to the current test. Of MSM with casual anal sex partners, 37 per cent reported not always using condoms in the past six months (Tables 2 and 3).

The overall HIV prevalence among MSM surveyed and tested (sex workers and unknowns excluded) was **2.0% (95% CI 1.4-2.7)** (Table 2). The highest prevalence was observed in those (i) aged 40 years and above (ii) born overseas (iii) tested because of seroconversion illness (iv) reporting a history of injecting drug use (v) reporting they did not always use condoms with casual anal sex partner/s and (vi) reporting six or more anal sex partners in the last six months (Table 2 and 3).

Table 1: HIV tests and questionnaires, by sex and HIV result, Jan-Jun 2007

Clinic type Site Number	Sexual Health		Gay Men's Clinic		All
	6*	18*	10	5	
All tests					
HIV tests (n)	44	4004	998	360	5406
Males					
HIV tests (n)	20	2316	908	347	3591
Positive tests (n)	0	33	12	1	46
Positive tests (%)	0.0	1.4	1.3	0.3	1.3 (0.9-1.7)
Questionnaires (n)	14	1061	835	277	2187
Response rate (%)**	70^	100^	92.0	79.8	95.8
MSM					
Questionnaires (n)	10	1058	715	267	2050
Positive tests (n)	0	30	10	1	41
Positive tests (%)***	0.0	2.8	1.4	0.4	2.0 (1.4-2.7)

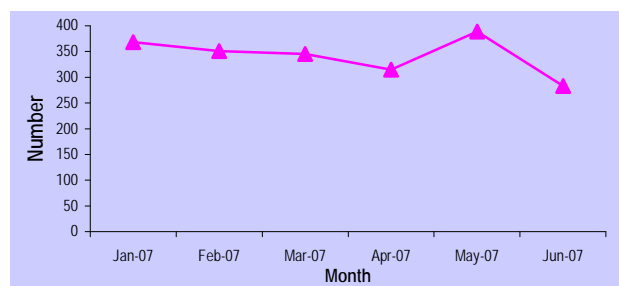
*Site 6 and 18 collect electronic data on all patients as part of routine sexual history taking and provide HIV risk behaviour information for MSM only for the purposes of sentinel surveillance

^Site 4 provided testing data only

**Response rate = total questionnaires completed / (total number of males tested for HIV at sites 5 and 10 + total number of MSM tested at sites 6 and 18) x 100

***Positive tests (%) = number of positive tests in MSM completing a questionnaire / total questionnaires completed in MSM x 100

Figure 1: Monthly HIV questionnaires among MSM, all clinics, Jan-Jun 2007



Conclusion: The HIV prevalence of 2.0% among MSM tested between January and June 2007 was similar to the estimates of 1.9% reported in 2006 (Apr-Dec 06) and 2.0% reported in the 2005 pilot study, but higher than the 2004 estimate of 1.3%. These findings appear consistent with the pattern of new diagnoses in Victoria (see *HIV Passive Surveillance update, page 2*).

Limitations: (i) the sentinel system only includes MSM seeking health services and thus the results cannot be assumed to apply to all MSM, (ii) the results describe HIV prevalence rather than incidence - HIV incidence is a more direct consequence of changes in transmission risk and will be

*In regards to sentinel surveillance, BBVs (blood borne viruses) refers to hepatitis C and STIs (sexually transmissible infections) refers to HIV, chlamydia and syphilis

For further information please contact: Jane Goller, Judy Gold or Megan Lim, Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health Research, Burnet Institute, Phone: +61 3 8506 2310, Fax: +61 3 9282 2138, Email: jane@burnet.edu.au; judy@burnet.edu.au; lim@burnet.edu.au

described in future analyses, (iii) the current system included a different clinic to the pilot study, but results appear comparable, and (iv) to ensure diagnoses due to confirmatory testing are not included in the system, these positive results are followed up more actively than negative results, as additional data are available from HIV passive surveillance.

Table 2: Characteristics of MSM surveyed and tested for HIV, all clinics (sex workers and unknowns excluded), Jan-Jun 2007

		Jan-Jun 2007			
		Tested		Positive	
		n	%	n	%
All individuals		2008	100	40	2.0
Age group (years)	16-19	48	2.4	0	0.0
	20-29	711	35.4	9	1.3
	30-39	659	32.8	13	2.0
	40-49	381	19.0	12	3.2
	50+	209	10.4	6	2.9
Country of birth	Australia	1454	75.3	24	1.7
	Other	478	24.7	13	2.7
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	No	1863	98.7	36	1.9
	Yes	24	1.3	0	0.0
Reason for test	Asymptomatic screen	1494	75.1	30	2.0
	Seroconversion illness	7	0.4	2	28.6
	Other	488	24.5	6	1.2
History of Injecting drug use	No	1865	94.6	32	1.7
	Yes	106	5.4	6	5.7
Timing of last negative HIV test	Within the last 12 months	611	31.0	12	2.0
	Greater than 12 months ago	1174	59.5	23	2.0
	No history of a previous test	189	9.6	5	2.7

Table 3: Characteristics of MSM surveyed and tested for HIV, excluding site 18* (sex workers and unknowns excluded), Jan-Jun 2007

		Jan-Jun 2007			
		Tested		Positive	
		n	%	n	%
All individuals		978	100	11	1.1
Male anal sex partners, last six months	None	96	10.1	0	0.0
	1-5	599	62.9	3	0.5
	6+	258	27.1	4	1.6
Regular anal sex partners, last six months	No	348	37.4	3	0.9
	Yes	582	62.6	4	0.7
HIV status of current regular partner	Positive	70	13.2	1	1.4
	Negative	354	66.9	4	1.1
	Don't know/he hasn't had a test	105	20.0	0	0.0
Condom use when having anal sex with regular partner/s, last six months	Did not always use condoms	328	56.4	2	0.6
	Always used condoms	254	43.6	2	0.8
Casual anal sex partners, last six months	No	232	24.5	0	0.0
	Yes	713	75.5	7	1.0
Condom use when having anal sex with casual partner/s, last six months	Did not always use condoms	260	36.5	4	1.5
	Always used condoms	453	63.5	3	0.7

*Site 18 uses electronic data collection which collects briefer behavioural information than the sentinel surveillance form used at other sites

Sites: Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Prahran Market Clinic, The Centre Clinic, Carlton Clinic, Geelong Sexual Health Clinic

The data in this report were collated and analysed by the Burnet Institute in collaboration with the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory, Melbourne Sexual Health Centre and the Victoria Department of Human Services (DHS). This project is funded by the DHS.

Updates from other surveillance systems

Passive Surveillance

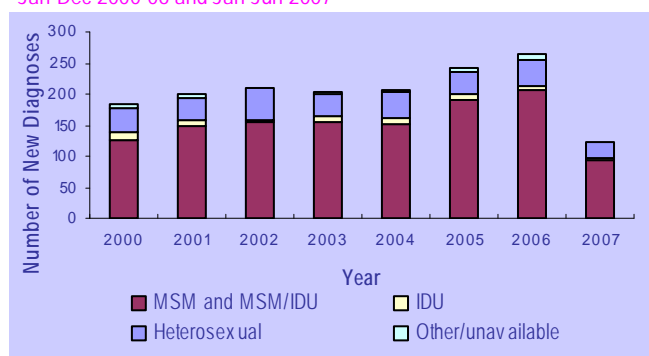
Between 2000 and 2006, there was a 43% increase in new HIV diagnoses in Victoria, from 184 in 2000 to 263 in 2006 (Figure 2). The major risk group for HIV was MSM and the proportion of diagnoses from this subgroup, has increased from 66 per cent in 2000 to 77 per cent in

2006. In the first half of 2007, there were 122 new HIV diagnoses, 93 (76%) of which were among MSM.

Among MSM, between 2000 and 2006, the largest proportion of HIV diagnoses were among those aged 30-39 years (38%), followed by 40-49 years (24%) then 20-29 years (20%). Although there have been increases in the number of diagnoses in all these age groups, the increase has been more marked in those aged 30-39 years and 40-49 years, leading to a shift in the median age at HIV diagnosis from 34 years in 1999 to 38 in 2006.

Over the same time period, approximately 80 per cent of diagnoses arose from Australian born MSM and greater than 90 per cent from those residing in metropolitan Melbourne. The proportion of MSM reporting that they acquired their infection in Victoria has remained over 70%, highlighting that transmission has remained localised.

Figure 2: New HIV diagnoses, by exposure category, Victoria, Jan-Dec 2000-06 and Jan-Jun 2007



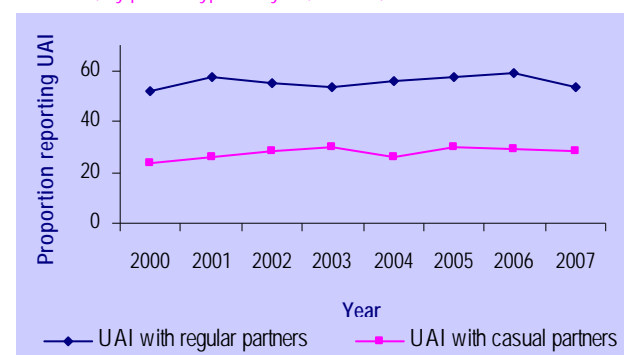
IDU = injecting drug user

Periodic Survey

Sexual risk behaviour among MSM is monitored through the annual Melbourne Gay Community Periodic Survey. The most recent survey conducted in February 2007 found that among MSM reporting casual sexual partners, there was an increase in unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) from 24% in 2000 to 29% in 2007 (Figure 3).

The Periodic Survey also showed a significant increase in the proportion of HIV negative MSM who reported a HIV test within 12 months of being surveyed, from 62% in 2000 to 69% in 2007.

Figure 3: Frequency of reported unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) in the past six months, by partner type and year, Victoria, 2000-2007



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