

## ABSTRACT

### **No evidence of changes in HIV prevalence and risk behaviours among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Barcelona (Spain), 1995-2000**

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Background: Catalonia, a Spanish autonomous region with 6 million inhabitants, had in 2000 an AIDS incidence rate of 81.8 per 106. In 1993 behavioural monitoring of Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) was introduced as part of its integrated HIV/AIDS surveillance system. This paper aims to compare HIV prevalence and risk behaviours of three cross-sectional surveys among MSM carried out in 1995 (n=745), 1998 (n=713) and 2000 (n=828) in Barcelona.

Methods: A convenience sample of MSM was recruited in saunas, sex-shops, a cruising site in a public park and through a mailing list of a gay community-based organization. Demographic and behavioural data over the past 12 months were collected by means of an anonymous self-administered questionnaire, which was returned by mail. Volunteered saliva samples were also anonymously collected to test for anti-HIV antibodies among 300 participants each year. Comparisons are adjusted by age, and always presented in the same order, 1995, 1998 and 2000 respectively.

Results: The questionnaire return rate ranged from 29% in 1995 to 24% in 2000. Mean age increased over the years (33,7, 34.8 and 36.1 years old  $p<0,001$ ). Prevalence of HIV in saliva was stable over the three surveys (14,2%, 15,5% and 17,9%  $p=ns$ ). Although an increase in the number of sexual partners in the last 12 months was observed (45,2%, 54,2% 57,2% had more than 10 different sexual partners,  $p<0,001$ ), there were no statistical differences between surveys in the frequency of anal intercourse with steady partner (85,4%), neither with casual partners (83%), in the prevalence of unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) with a steady partner (53,5%, 52,2%, 58,9%,  $p=ns$ ) neither with casual partners (24,2%, 21,8%, 25,4%,  $p=ns$ ). Conclusions: In Catalonia, we have not identified a significant increase on sexual risk behaviours among MSM, however prevalence of HIV and UAI were still high. Intensive and new strategies of prevention should develop to reverse this situation.