

Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Risk of HIV Infection in Men Attending a Sexually Transmitted Diseases Clinic in Dakar, Senegal

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ABSTRACT

This cross-sectional study was carried out among male outpatients with symptoms of STDs at the STD reference centre at the Institute of Social Hygiene (IHS), Dakar, Senegal, from March 1989 through May 1991. This study was used to determine the prevalence of STDs and HIV among male patients attending an STD clinic and to identify their socio-demographic characteristics and risk factors. A total of 975 patients were enrolled in the study. The most common syndromes were urethritis (76%) and genital ulcers (22%). Considering single infections, the major STD agents were *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* (*N.gonorrhoeae*, 30%), *Chlamydia trachomatis* (*C.trachomatis*, 15%), *Treponema pallidum* (*T.pallidum*, 12%), and *Haemophilus ducreyi* (*H.ducreyi*, 7%). HIV prevalence was 2.6 percent (25/975). After multivariate analysis, the risk factors associated with HIV infection were a history of sex with prostitutes (odds ratio [OR] = 8.6, 95% confidence interval [CI] = 2.0 – 37.8), unprotected sexual contact (OR = 5.6, 95% CI = 1.2– 25.0), a history of urethritis (OR = 3.4, 95% CI = 1.3 – 8.9), current STDs due to *H.ducreyi* or *T.pallidum* (OR = 6.1, 95% CI = 2 – 18.8), and mixed STD infection (OR = 5.3, 95% CI = 1.3 – 21.8).

HIV prevalence was quite low in this population compared to similar studies of STD patients from other sub-Saharan African countries. *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* and *Chlamydia trachomatis* were the leading causes of STDs. A history of risky sexual behaviour, previous STDs, current genital ulcers, and mixed STD infections were associated with HIV infection. Further studies are necessary to determine changes in the relationship of STDs and HIV infection in this population. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 1997;1(2):26–35)

RÉSUMÉ

Maladies sexuellement transmissibles et risque d'infection par le VIH chez les patients du centre de référence des maladies sexuellement transmissibles de Dakar, Sénégal

Cette étude transversale menée de mars 1989 à mai 1991 chez les patients externes souffrant de maladies sexuellement transmissibles (MST) au centre de référence des MST de l'institut d'hygiène sociale de Dakar, Sénégal, avait pour but d'évaluer la prévalence des MST, du VIH, les caractéristiques socio-démographiques et les facteurs de risque des participants. 975 hommes ont été recrutés pour l'étude. Les syndromes les plus fréquemment rencontrés étaient les uréthrites (76%) et les ulcérations génitales (22%). Omission faite des

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explained by the diagnosis and treatment of STDs in other health care settings. However, we considered our study population more representative of the STD patient population compared to other health centres whose main activities were not the management of STDs.

Studies in sub-Saharan Africa have reported STDs among asymptomatic men.^{24,25} Therefore our study, which only enrolled patients, might underestimate the prevalence of urethritis and their causative agents. Nevertheless, we think this had a minor impact on our results since a rapid STD assessment in Senegal has shown a very low prevalence of STDs in asymptomatic men.²⁶ Despite the fact that point estimates were unstable due to the small number of HIV seropositive men, our study found that the main determinant of HIV infection in this population was sexual behaviour. Patients at a higher risk of HIV infection were more likely to practice unprotected sex and to have a history of STDs. They were more likely to have treatment failure due to self medication or inappropriate treatment of their disease in other health settings.

This study was conducted early in the AIDS epidemic in Senegal, when national campaigns and health education programmes in high risk groups were not well established. It could therefore serve as a baseline reference for future cross-sectional studies monitoring changes in the prevalence of HIV among male STD patients. Comprehending the interrelationship between HIV infection and other current STDs is critical to the control of HIV transmission.²⁷ Understanding the role of STDs in the progression of HIV disease is still very limited, and further studies are needed to address this question.

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