

# HIV Treatment and Prevention Outcomes Among Gay, Bisexual and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men in Canada's Three Largest Cities

## WHY DID WE RESEARCH THIS TOPIC?

- In recent years, 45-50% of all new HIV diagnoses in Canada have occurred among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBM) despite comprising only 3-5% of the population.
- In 2014, Canada adopted the United Nations' goal of aiming to have 90% of people living with HIV aware of their diagnosis, 90% of these individuals receiving treatment, and 90% of those receiving treatment achieving viral suppression.
- We wanted to understand the degree to which HIV treatment and prevention services have been successful among GBM in Canada's three major cities, and if there was any variation from city to city.

## HOW DID WE RESEARCH THIS?

- We recruited 2,449 GBM living in Montreal (1,179), Toronto (517) and Vancouver (753). Each participant filled out an electronic survey about their HIV status, HIV testing history, use of HIV treatment, demographic information, use of health services, health status, and other individual characteristics, including substance use.
- Participants also underwent biological testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI). For participants living with HIV, we also measured their HIV viral load.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- GBM living with HIV in our study are well involved in the Cascade of Care: 97% to 99.8% were aware of their HIV+ status, 82% to 89% were receiving treatment, and of those receiving treatment, 94% to 99% had a suppressed viral load.
- While we did find some differences across the three cities, they were negligible. Notably, GBM living with HIV in Montreal were more likely to have an unsuppressed viral load (10.6%) than men living in Vancouver (2.6%).
- These results demonstrate that policies and services to engage GBM at risk for acquiring HIV and those living with HIV have been largely successful across all three cities.
- Younger GBM living with HIV were less likely to have a suppressed viral load. This was consistent with previous findings.
- Those with a primary care provider—or who had been diagnosed with an STI other than HIV in the past—were also associated with lower odds of having an unsuppressed viral load.



### HIV VIRAL LOAD

A measure of the number of HIV particles in a milliliter of blood. This measure is useful in assessing how well a person's HIV therapy is controlling the virus in their body.



### CASCADE OF CARE

A model that outlines the steps of care that people living with HIV go through—from initial diagnosis to achieving viral suppression—and shows the proportion of individuals living with HIV who are engaged at each stage.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE FINDINGS?

- Although HIV policies and programs in these three cities have been effective, this analysis also found opportunities for improvement. These include finding ways to increase uptake of HIV treatment among younger GBM, increasing access to primary care providers, and increasing access to STI testing.
- Given the overall success of HIV testing and treatment in Canada's largest cities among GBM, it might be advantageous to adopt more ambitious goals for HIV testing and treatment in Canada.

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