

Chlamydia and Gonorrhea Infections Among Sexually Active Gay, Bisexual, and Other Men Who Have Sex With Men in Montréal

WHY DID WE RESEARCH THIS TOPIC?

- Reported cases of the bacterial sexually transmitted infections (STIs) chlamydia (*C. trachomatis*) and gonorrhea (*N. gonorrhoeae*) are increasing among Canadian men.
- However, we don't have a lot of information about the presence of these STIs among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBM).
- These infections are a serious health concern. If untreated, they can lead to medical problems like inflammation (acute or chronic) of the epididymis (canal assuring sperm circulation from the testicles to the urethra), the prostate, the urethra, the rectum, or the pharynx. This inflammation of mucous membranes increases the risk of HIV transmission or acquisition.
- These infections are becoming resistant to antibiotics, making them increasingly harder to treat.
- Identifying both the overall presence of these infections, as well as describing where they are most often found in the body among GBM, could help in developing more effective screening programs.

HOW DID WE RESEARCH THIS?

- For this study, we recruited 1,179 cisgender and transgender men living in the Montréal area who had been sexually active with at least one other man in the past six months.
- Each participant was tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea at multiple sites on the body: the genitals through urine testing, and the rectum and the throat using swabs.
- Each participant also completed a short questionnaire and was asked by a public health nurse if they had recently been experiencing symptoms.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- We found that among sexually active GBM in Montreal, gonorrhea was present at an overall rate of 5.6%, twice that of chlamydia at 2.8%.
- Most of the infections were located in the throat and rectum areas. At the urogenital area, gonorrhea was present at a rate of 0.4%, as was chlamydia.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE FINDINGS?

- It is crucial to screen multiple sites on the body for bacterial STI infection. If we had limited our testing to the genital area alone, 80% and 94% of chlamydia and gonorrhea infections, respectively, would have been missed.

- Due to the widespread reliance on genital testing, our findings suggest that many chlamydia and gonorrhea infections in the throat and rectum are missed during routine screenings.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a shortage of testing materials. Our findings suggest that if testing supplies are limited, throat and rectal screening might be prioritized in asymptomatic persons with sexual activities involving these sites.

ABOUT ENGAGE

The Engage Study is a longitudinal cohort of GBM from the community that collects detailed sociodemographic, behavioural, attitudinal, and biological information related to sexual health, HIV, hepatitis C, other STIs, substance use, and psychosocial health. Recognizing the significant lack of understanding of the needs of GBM across Canada—and that GBM continue to be affected by HIV and STIs at alarming rates—the study was designed to address critical knowledge gaps in HIV and STI prevention. With intervention sites in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, it represents a national partnership of researchers, public health leaders, and community leaders whose shared goal is to conduct, support, and facilitate high-quality and policy-relevant HIV research on GBM.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



FUNDERS



This work was supported by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (TE2-138299), the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research (TE2-138299), the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (TE2-138299), the CIHR Canadian HIV/AIDS Trials Network (CTN300), the Public Health Agency of Canada (4500370314), Canadian Blood Services and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) du Québec (15-SP-00177).

ARTICLE CITATION:

Doyle CM, Maheu-Giroux M, Lambert G, Mishra S, Apelian H, Messier-Peet M, et al. Combination HIV Prevention Strategies Among Montreal Gay, Bisexual, and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men in the PrEP Era: A Latent Class Analysis. *AIDS and behavior*. 2021;25(1):269-83.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Simonne Harvey-Lavoie, Université de Montréal, simonne.harvey-lavoie@umontreal.ca, or Gilles Lambert, Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal, gilles.lambert.ccsmtl@ssss.gouv.qc.ca.

LINK TO FULL PUBLICATION:

https://journals.lww.com/stdjournal/Abstract/9000/COMMUNITY_BASED_PREVALENCE_ESTIMATES_OF_CHLAMYDIA.97654.aspx

