

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEWLY ARRIVED ASIAN BORN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN DIAGNOSED WITH HIV IN SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE, 2014-2017: A CASE-CONTROL STUDY.

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Background:

Reports suggest newly arrived Asian men who have sex with men (MSM) may be an emergent risk group for HIV in Australia; however, little is known about how they compare to local MSM diagnosed with HIV. The aim of this study was to compare the characteristics of these two groups.

Methods:

We conducted a case control study of MSM diagnosed with HIV from three public sexual health clinics in Melbourne and Sydney between January 2014 and October 2017. Cases were Asian born MSM who had arrived in Australia within 4 years of diagnosis. Controls were local men: Australian born MSM or MSM resident in Australia for at least 15 years, excluding men born in Asia. Characteristics between the two groups were compared using the chi-square test

Results:

Between 2014 and 2017 the proportion of MSM newly diagnosed with HIV who met the case definition increased from 14% to 26% ($p_{\text{trend}} < 0.001$). Median age among cases ($n=111$) was lower than controls ($n=209$) (27 vs. 32 years, $p < 0.001$). Among Asian men, 75% spoke a language other than English, and 88% did not have access to Medicare, Australia's universal health insurance scheme. Asian men were more likely to be students (61% vs. 8%, $p < 0.001$). Within the 12 months preceding diagnosis, Asian men had significantly fewer male sexual partners (median 4 vs. 10, $p < 0.001$); were more likely to always use condoms or not engage in insertive anal intercourse with casual male partners (39% vs. 25%, $p = 0.02$); and were less likely to inject drugs (4% vs. 16%, $p = 0.001$). Asian men were less likely to have tested for HIV previously (71% vs. 89%, $p < 0.001$) and had a lower CD4 count at diagnosis (median 326 vs. 520, $p < 0.001$). The proportions of men with HIV subtypes CRF01-AE or B were 55% and 29% among Asian men, and 16% and 73% among local men respectively ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion:

Asian MSM diagnosed with HIV reported lower risk and had more advanced HIV infection. These findings suggest specific, targeted HIV testing and prevention campaigns among Asian MSM in Australia, including international students, are required.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None