

POOR LEVELS OF AWARENESS OF ANAL CANCER IN HIV POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE MEN

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Background:

While rare in the general population, human papillomavirus (HPV)-related anal cancer is becoming more common among people living with HIV (PLHIV) and HIV negative gay and bisexual men (GBM). Most anal cancers are diagnosed late and require treatment with chemo/radiotherapy and surgery. We assessed community awareness of anal cancer in a community-based cohort, to inform public health interventions targeting early anal cancer diagnosis.

Methods:

Participants recruited through HIV community organisations and a social media dating site completed an anonymous online questionnaire. Topics included knowledge of symptoms and perceived risk of anal cancer, experience with screening for anal cancer, and HPV vaccination.

Results:

1660 responses were received, 1574 (94.8%) from HIV positive and HIV negative mostly gay or bisexual men. Of these, the majority (60.2%) thought their risk of anal cancer was the same, or lower, than the general population. Only 15.4% of men ≥ 35 years had talked with their doctor about anal cancer and 20.8% of respondents' aged ≥ 35 years recollected receiving an anal cancer examination. Only a small minority (8.9%) of men 18-24 years had received HPV vaccination.

Conclusion:

Despite being at elevated risk, knowledge and awareness of anal cancer in men living with HIV and HIV negative GBM was poor, few had been screened, and vaccination rates in young men were very low. Health professionals potentially have important roles to play in raising anal cancer awareness in these populations, conducting digital ano-rectal examinations and offering HPV vaccination.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Nothing to declare