MEN HAVING SEX WITH MEN (MSM) AND HIV/AIDS IN PERU: ADDRESSING NEW RESEARCH AND PREVENTION EFFORTS

J. Maziel Giron1, Jeffrey Mandel2, Kimberly Page2, Tim Lane2, and Carlos Caceres1

1Unit of Health, Sexuality and Human Development – School of Public Health – Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Lima - Peru
2University of California San Francisco, San Francisco, CA – USA

Issues

The HIV epidemic in Peru is concentrated among MSM, with reported prevalence rates ranging from 10-22%. Research on this population has been hindered by factors such as lack of social visibility and access to certain subgroups of MSM in Peru, resulting in a failure to capture the diversity of this population.

Description

A review of HIV-related research on MSM in Peru showed that knowledge about HIV (prevalence, incidence, mechanisms of transmission and social behaviors) is still very limited. Most studies, particularly those focused on HIV prevalence and its associated risk factors, are usually carried out with samples of MSM selected from high-risk sexual networks in lower-income communities. Information regarding other sub-groups, e.g., transgender, middle & upper class MSM, is lacking. Some studies have used convenience sampling as their recruitment methodology, leading to a lack of representativeness and a failure to capture the diversity of MSM in terms of behaviors and specific prevention needs. There is also a lack on information regarding sero-incidence among the MSM population and its subgroups.

Lessons learned

Over the past decade, national surveillance data have not been collected regularly and data are not available to assess trends in HIV prevalence among various subgroups over time. Current studies suggest that prevalence figures have stabilized in the past few years, although the impact of increasing access to ART on mortality (and possibly infectiousness) among PLWHA remains to be measured. Therefore existing data do not provide a full understanding of HIV infection among MSM populations in Peru.

Next steps

Alternative methodologies are needed to capture the broad diversity of MSM, such as time-location or respondent-driven sampling techniques for recruitment. The HIV National Response must identify the specific needs of subgroups within MSM populations if it is to launch successful prevention and care campaigns.

Contact email: maziel.giron@upch.pe

An analysis of the epidemiological surveillance data found that 51% of transgender people were reactive for syphilis and 33% were HIV positive, as opposed to 13% and 18% of nontransgender gay-identified men, respectively, and 11% and 15% among bisexual men, respectively.