

Using Venue-Based Surveys to Assess HIV and HBV Prevalence Among Dallas' Young Gay and Bisexual Men

BACKGROUND

Some studies in the late 1980's and early 1990's showed that the number of AIDS cases among gay white males began to decline. At the same time, there were increasing numbers of cases observed among younger men and minority men who have sex with men (MSM). In addition, small studies started to note high levels of infection in young MSM under age 30.

Because this population has often been difficult to access, previous studies were often biased by including only those men who showed up at counseling and testing sites to test. This made the picture of infection somewhat skewed, because it did not include guys who did not go to these places.

To address this challenge, the AIDS Prevention Project of Dallas (now at UT Southwestern Medical Center) worked with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to develop a "venue-based" survey of young gay and bisexual men, the results of which could provide a more generalizable estimate of HIV infection among this population. The resulting profiles of risk may be of potential use to prevention, planning, and education programs.

The methods:

- An anonymous, venue-based survey and testing
- We "hung out" in and around places frequented by MSM (bookstores, churches, street locations, bars, dance clubs, social organizations, bath houses, parks, and popular cruising spots)
- Venues where 7 or more eligible guys walked through within a 4 hour time period were included
- Recruiters invited guys to participate in the survey, done in a specially equipped RV parked nearby
- We took a blood sample to test for HIV, Hepatitis B, and Syphilis
- A detailed questionnaire asked about personal beliefs, sex, family life, sex, health history, sex, and more about sexual behaviors
- We gave prevention counseling for STDs
- All participants received condoms, risk reduction information, and a monetary incentive for their participation; some were given vouchers for free Hepatitis A and B vaccination.
- All participants were encouraged to schedule a confidential post-test counseling appointment to receive their results; referrals to health or social service agencies were then provided as needed

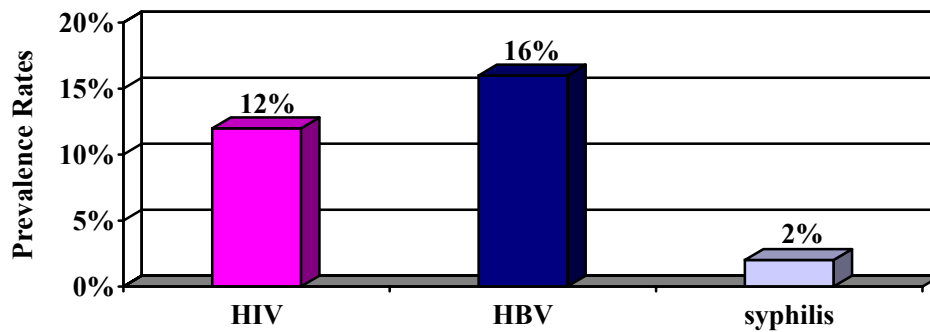
Who was eligible?

- Young, gay or bisexual men who have sex with men (MSM), ages 15-29
- Had to be residents of Dallas or its surrounding counties
- Participants could only take the survey once!

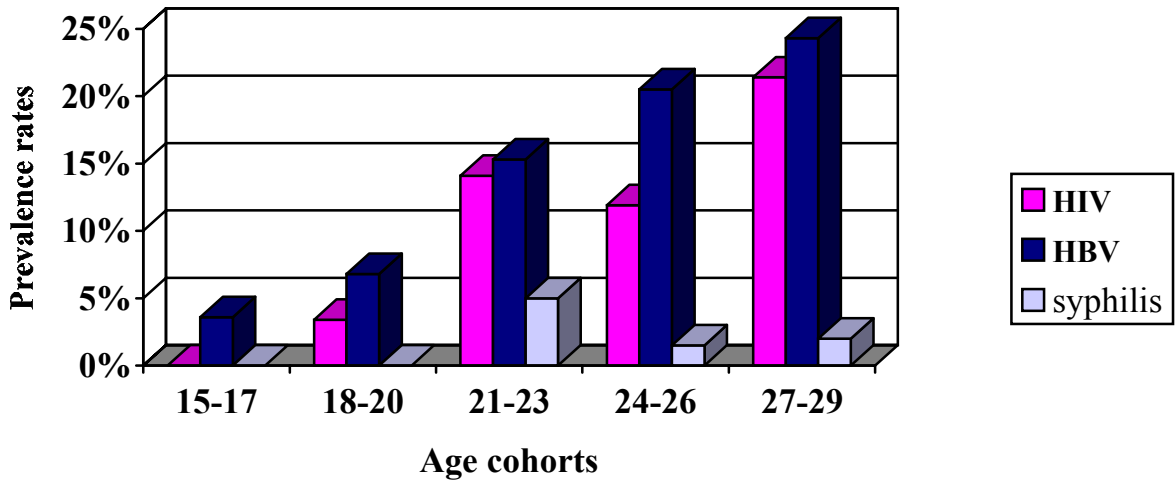
RESULTS

- Between 1994 and 2000, a total of 7,520 young men between the ages of 15 and 29 were surveyed and tested, of which 1,045 were sexually active MSM
- Overall prevalence rates among this group were 12% for HIV, 16% for HBV, and 2% for syphilis
- Infection rates rose sharply with age, being much higher among 27 to 29 year olds (21% for HIV and 24% for HBV) than among 15 to 17 year olds (0% and 4%, respectively)
- African-Americans had the highest rates of infection, up to 3 times the rates of Non-Hispanic Whites for HIV, and twice the rate of HBV infection

**Prevalence of HIV, HBV, and Syphilis
Among Dallas MSM age 15-29 (N = 1,045)**



Prevalence by Age Cohort



Prevalence by Ethnicity

