

Seroepidemiology of HIV and HSV-2 infections among men who have sex in men

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Herpes simplex virus type-2 (HSV-2) appears to be an important factor in sexual transmission and acquisition of HIV, and men who have sex with men (MSM) are particularly vulnerable to both infections. The present study aims to examine the prevalence of HIV, HSV-2, and risk behaviors among MSM in Hong Kong. Three hundred and six MSM seeking voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) services were recruited in 2012-2013. Each MSM completed a structured questionnaire survey which explored socio-demographic characteristics, history of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), HSV-2/HIV-related knowledge, and sexual behaviors. Blood specimens were collected for HIV and HSV-2 screening. Overall, the seroprevalence of HIV and HSV-2 were 1.0% and 3.3%, respectively. There was no statistical difference in seropositivity of HSV-2 between HIV-positive and HIV-negative MSM ($p=0.190$). Of all MSM, 7.8% self-reported having ever contracted STD. Knowledge of HSV-2 transmission (12.1%) and symptoms (40.8%) were low, and only 2.6% of MSM had ever been tested for HSV-2. Of anal sex MSM, 40.1% (117/292) always used condom in the last 6 months. Among those who had visited commercial sex worker, limited consistent condom use (31.3%) was found. Our findings suggest a relatively low seroprevalence of HSV-2 among MSM attendants of VCT center. As the majority of MSM have limited understandings of HSV-2 transmission and the sexual risk behaviors are still prevalent, effective educational intervention and serosurveillance for HSV-2 among the hidden MSM population are needed to further enhance HIV/STD control in Hong Kong.

Biography

Denise Chan is a research Assistant Professor at the Stanley Ho Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research areas include epidemiology of HIV/STIs and community-based surveillance of infectious diseases. She has been actively involved in field researches on sexually transmitted diseases, particular among the at-risk populations.

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