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HIV and STI prevalence and patterns of not having a recent HIV test in individuals with suspected STIs in Panama

Amanda M Gabster, Griselda B Arteaga and Juan Miguel Pascale
Gorgas Memorial Institute for Health Studies, Panama

Background: The 2013 HIV prevalence in the Panamanian adult general population was 0.7%. Studies have shown that the presence of other STIs increases both the susceptibility to and transmission of HIV. In the present study, individuals with signs or symptoms of STIs and those who believe they could be infected due to high-risk sexual behavior were included to measure STI and HIV prevalence, socio-demographic factors; additional analyses examined factors associated with not having had a recent (in 2012/2013) HIV test.

Methods: Bio-behavioral data was collected in public health and clinical non-profit centers between March-July, 2013 in the urban districts of Colón and San Miguelito, Panama. Univariate, bivariate and logistical analyses were performed. Significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results: From 251 male and female participants, 4.31% were positive for HIV, 3.86% for syphilis, 2.98% for HBsAg and 8.90% for anti-HBc, 0.00% for HCV and 54.24% for HSV-2 (IgG). Recent HIV testing was significantly less likely in females compared to males and in San Miguelito compared to Colón. Despite Colón's "MSM Friendly clinic", MSM in this district were not significantly more likely to have had a recent HIV test than MSM in San Miguelito.

Conclusion: STI prevalence was found to be high in the participants from both districts. HI prevalence was found to be 6.16 times higher than in the general population. Recent HIV testing in individuals with suspected STI's was low in males, and even lower in females. Scale-up of HIV/STI screening is needed for both sexes.

Biography

Amanda M Gabster completed her MSc in Public Health in 2013 from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and her BSc in 2008 from the University of Alberta, Canada. Since 2013, she has been working at the Gorgas Memorial Institute as a Coordinator for a project in HIV Epidemiology in Adolescents.

agabster@gorgas.gob.pa

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