Delayed HIV testing among men who have sex with men in China is common: findings from the T2T Study

Huachun Zou^{1,2,3}, Xiaojun Meng⁴, Yong Lu², Tianjian Jia⁴, Hanlu Yin⁴, Zhenzhou Luo⁵, Yi Ding⁵, Weiying Chen⁵, Shujie Huang⁶, Heping Zheng⁶, Bin Yang⁶ and Andrew Grulich³

1. School of Public Health (Shenzhen), Sun Yat-sen University, Shenzhen, China 2. School of Public Health, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China 3. Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 4. Wuxi Municipal Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Wuxi, China 5. Shenzhen Nanshan Center for Chronic Disease Control, Shenzhen, China 6. Dermatology Hospital, Southern Medical University, Guangzhou, China

Correspondence to Dr. Huachun Zou: zouhuachun@mail.sysu.edu.cn or hzou@kirby.unsw.edu.au

Background

Guidelines in China recommend yearly HIV testing for men who have sex with men (MSM) and some other countries recommend up to 3-monthly for MSM at higher risk of HIV transmission. We assessed the prevalence of and factors associated with delayed HIV testing among MSM in China.

Methods

MSM aged ≥ 18 years old who had ≥ 2 male sex partners were recruited between January and August, 2017 in 3 metropolitan cities: Guangzhou and Shenzhen in southern China and Wuxi in eastern China. A self-completed tablet-based questionnaire was collected about HIV/STI testing history, socio-demographic characteristics and sexual behaviors. HIV, syphilis, rectal/urethral gonorrhea, rectal/urethral chlamydia and anogenital warts were tested/checked. Patients were assigned “high-risk” status if they had >5 partners or an STI in the past 6 months. Delayed testing status was defined as having no test within the past 6 months for high-risk men, 12 months for non-high-risk men. Mixed effects logistic regression models were used to determine factors associated with delayed testing status.

Results

A total of 603 MSM were enrolled in our study, with a mean age of 27.9 years (SD=7.8). Overall, 81.4% (491/603) had ever tested for HIV. High-risk (27.0%, 163/603) and non-high-risk men (73.0%, 440/603) had similar rates of delayed HIV testing: 31.3% vs 28.2% ($X^2=1.118$, $P=0.290$). Younger men were significantly less likely to have ever tested (50.0% in <20 years vs 84.9% in ≥ 20 years, $P<0.001$) and more likely to have delayed HIV testing (53.3% vs 26.3%, $P<0.001$). Men with delayed HIV testing status were significantly more likely to have more sex partners (26.3% vs 17.3%, $P=0.012$), have inconsistent condom use with casual partners (54.8% vs 39.7%, $P=0.009$) and be diagnosed with HIV (16.6% vs 5.6%, $P<0.001$) and urethral chlamydia (10.9% vs 3.8%, $P=0.002$).

Conclusions

Delayed HIV testing is common among MSM in China. Efforts are needed to further decrease delayed HIV-testing among MSM, particularly young men who engage in high-risk sexual behaviors.