



LGBT HEALTH

HIV, SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS, AND SEXUAL HEALTH SCREENING IN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN IN LEBANON: A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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Objective: The aim of this study was two-fold: first, to determine the prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in a large sample of men who have sex with men (MSM) attending a sexual health clinic in Beirut, Lebanon; and second, to identify the predictors of HIV/ STI screening, in order to understand motivations for screening in a context where rates of sexual health screening are low.

Methods: Data were obtained from the medical records of 1364 MSM who visited a sexual health clinic in Beirut between 2014 and 2018. Socio-demographic and diagnostic information, and quantitative data concerning sexual risk behavior and HIV/ STI screening behavior were collected.

Results: The prevalence of HIV (5.95%) and other STIs (57.32%) in the participant sample was similar to that of other European countries. 58.22% of the sample reported used alcohol or drugs during/ before sex; 69.59% reported having used cellphone applications for sex; 33.09% considered their HIV risk to be high while 21.34% did not know their level of risk. On the whole, there was a high prevalence of these risk behaviors in MSM who had been screened for HIV/STIs before than those never tested. A binary logistic regression model showed that condom use, and infection with HPV, Chlamydia, and Gonorrhea were significant predictors of having had an HIV/ STI screen.

Conclusion: These findings demonstrate an urgent need to encourage sexual health promotion and HIV prevention awareness in Lebanese MSM and, most importantly, to promote STI/ HIV screening in this high-risk population.

