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PREVENTIVE HEALTH IN A CHANGING WORLD

SYPHILIS TESTING RATES AMONG HIV-INFECTED PERSONS IN SINGAPORE, 2006–2017

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Background

Syphilis has re-emerged as a public health concern globally. The interplay between HIV and syphilis underscores the importance of integrating prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections into HIV care. The aim of this study was to assess temporal trends and epidemiological profile of syphilis testing among HIV-infected persons in Singapore.

Methods

The study subjects were Singapore residents diagnosed with HIV who had ≥ 2 visits to the national referral centre for HIV care in 2006–2017. Syphilis testing rates per 100 person-years of follow-up (PYFU) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were determined based on the presence of non-treponemal syphilis tests in each year.

Results

A total of 3,285 HIV-infected patients were included in the study, and 84.5% had ≥ 1 syphilis test during their follow-up period. Among the 2,776 patients tested, 32.6% had ≥ 1 positive result.

The overall testing rate per 100 PYFU was 34.5 (95% CI 33.6–35.4). The testing rate per 100 PYFU increased significantly from 27.8 (95% CI 25.5–30.3) in 2013 to 47.5 (95% CI 44.9–50.2) in 2017.

The testing rates were significantly higher among men, Malays, those infected with HIV via homosexual/bisexual mode and intravenous drug use, and diagnosed with HIV after 2006–2008. Significantly lower testing rates were observed in older patients (≥ 30 years at HIV diagnosis), those who were ever married, had prior AIDS diagnosis and CD4 count ≤ 200 cells/mm³ at HIV diagnosis.

Conclusion

HIV-infected persons are recommended to undergo more frequent syphilis testing (at least once a year), particularly among those at higher risk.