



Low testing uptake and their determinants among IDUs in Georgia

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Introduction

Injecting drug use remains the primary route of HIV transmission in Georgia. Majority of new HIV infections are attributed to intravenous drug use or sexual contract with intravenous drug user. Early detection of HIV infection is vital in disease outcome and spread of the infection.

Objectives

The study aimed to evaluate HIV testing uptake among Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) through Bio-Behavioral Surveys in five cities of Georgia.

Methods

Study used data from Bio-Behavioral surveys conducted in 2008-2009 among IDUs in five cities of Georgia. Recruitment was done through respondent driven sampling. Interviews were conducted using standardized behavior questionnaires. The study protocols and questionnaires were approved by Ethical Committee of the HIV/AIDS Patients Support Foundation. Data of 1,112 IDUs was analyzed in SPSS.

Results

Majority of IDUs (71.2%) were never tested on HIV during their lifetime. IDUs older than 30 years were more likely not to be tested on HIV. Those who injected Ephedrine and Buprenorphine during last month had higher odds of not been tested compared to heroin users. IDUs from Gori and Telavi were more likely not undergo test, while not testing was significantly lower among Batumi IDUs compared to the capital city residents. Not knowing of HIV testing possibility in the neighborhood was significantly associated with never being tested. After adjustment the young age (<30 years), residency in Gori and Telavi and lack of awareness about HIV testing possibilities remained significantly associated with never testing for HIV among IDUs.

Table: Univariate and Multivariate analyses of no testing on HIV among IDUs in 5 cities of Georgia

Indicator	N=1112	Never tested on HIV	
		Unadjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Never tested on HIV	71.2%		
Age groups		p<0.005	p<0.005
<30 years	31.2%	1.0	1.0
31 - 40	35.3%	0.58 (0.42-0.80)	0.59 (0.42-0.83)
41 and more	33.5%	0.96 (0.50 – 0.98)	0.76 (0.53-1.09)
Types of drugs injected in the past month (single drug):		p<0.0001	
Heroin	33.6	1.0	
Ephedrine	9.2%	2.6 (1.50-4.52)	
Buprenorphine	17.7%	2.19 (1.46-3.29)	
Multiple/ Other	39.5%	1.35 (1.01 – 1.82)	
City of residence		p<0.0001	p<0.0001
Tbilisi	27.3%	1.0	1.0
Gori	18.0%	2.02 (1.32-3.09)	1.76 (1.12-2.77)
Telavi	18.4%	3.69 (2.26-6.02)	3.21 (1.91-5.39)
Zugdidi	18.3%	1.04 (0.71-1.52)	1.05 (0.69-1.58)
Batumi	18.0%	0.57 (0.39-0.83)	0.64 (0.41 -1.0)
Awareness about possibility to get HIV testing in the community		P<0.01	P<0.01
Yes	81.9%	1.0	1.0
No	18.1%	2.16 (1.46-3.19)	1.72 (1.14-2.60)

Conclusions

Despite intensive preventive interventions HIV testing uptake is very low, specifically among young IDUs. Awareness about HIV testing capabilities in the community should be increased and in certain geographical locations, which could help increase HIV testing uptake. Importance to focus awareness and preventive interventions on individuals injecting Ephedrine and Buprenorphine and being younger than 30 years is important to increase HIV testing rates among IDUs.