

New diagnoses of HIV infection NSW, 2010

Summary

In 2010, 308 people newly diagnosed with HIV infections were notified in NSW, which was similar to the number notified in 2009 (n=329).

Introduction

Under the NSW Public Health Act, laboratories report all confirmed HIV infections to NSW Health and a questionnaire is sent to all notifying doctors to collect epidemiological information on cases.

Newly diagnosed cases

In NSW in 2010, 357 HIV positive tests were reported from reference laboratories where the person tested was newly diagnosed in NSW. Of these, 49 had been previously diagnosed with HIV elsewhere, or were not NSW residents, and 308 were in NSW residents newly diagnosed with HIV. A total of 283 (92%) were male and the median age at diagnosis was 38 years. Most cases were reported to be homosexually acquired (234), and acquisition was identified as heterosexual (51), injecting drug use (9), mother to child transmission (1) and other or unknown sources (13) for the remainder (Figure 1).

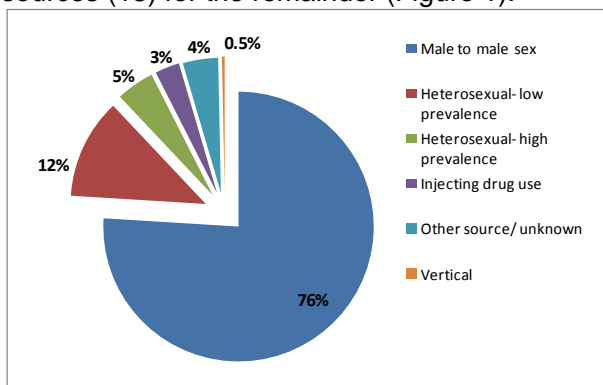


Figure 1: Newly diagnosed HIV infections by reported exposure, NSW 2010

Of the 49 cases who did not have new diagnoses or were not residents in NSW, 21 were previously diagnosed either overseas or interstate, and 28 were people residing overseas or interstate at the time of diagnosis.

HIV in men who have sex with men

Of the 234 (76%) newly diagnosed cases of HIV infection in men who have sex with men (MSM), 160 (68%) were residents of central and southeast Sydney and 141 (60%) were Australian born. The median age was 35 years and four (2%) cases were Aboriginal.

Only 76 (32%) cases reported having had an HIV test in the year prior to diagnosis and 50 (21%) reported never having a previous HIV test (Figure 2). One hundred and twenty one cases (52%) had evidence of recent infection (i.e. either a negative or indeterminate HIV antibody test or a seroconversion illness in the previous 12 months) and 33 (14%) had evidence of

advanced disease at time of diagnosis (CD4 count <200 or an AIDS defining illness within 3 months of HIV diagnosis). Patients with advanced disease were older than those with a recent infection (median age of 40 years compared to 35.5 years).

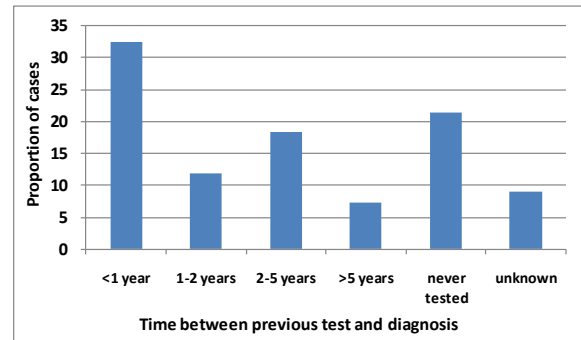


Figure 2: Proportion of homosexually acquired HIV infections by time between previous test and diagnosis, NSW 2010.

Heterosexually acquired HIV

Fifty one (17%) newly diagnosed cases in NSW in 2010 were heterosexually acquired. Thirty four (67%) cases were male and the median age was 43 years. Nineteen cases were born in Australia, 14 were born in high prevalence countries*, most commonly Zimbabwe (3) and South Africa (3), and the remainder (18) were born in countries other than Australia that are not known to have high prevalence.

Males comprised 50% of cases born in high prevalence countries* compared to 71% of cases born in low prevalence countries. Thirty one (61%) cases of heterosexually acquired HIV reported heterosexual sex with a person from a country other than Australia. Sixteen (31%) cases had evidence of advanced disease at the time of diagnosis.

HIV acquired through IDU

A total of 9 cases of HIV acquired in NSW in 2010 reported injecting drug use as the route of transmission. Of those 4 were females and 5 were males. Six were Australian born. Cases were aged 30 – 49 years at HIV diagnosis.

Conclusion

The number of people newly diagnosed with HIV infection in NSW remained stable in 2010. Male homosexual exposure was the most common exposure. Promoting safe sex practices and regular testing among this group remains important.

* High prevalence countries defined as those with an estimated number of adults aged 15-49 years living with HIV/AIDS greater than one percent. UNAIDS website, accessed 13 October 2011. <http://www.unaids.org>