

COHORT OF MEN
WHO HAVE SEX
WITH MEN (MSM)
LISBON
CHECKPOINTLX



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INTRODUCTION

CheckpointLX is a project of GAT - Group of Activists for Treatment of HIV / AIDS that offers anonymous, confidential and free rapid HIV screening for men who have sex with men (MSM). Counseling is offered by trained MSM, promoting access to prevention and sexual health in a more effective and integrated way in the reality of the MSM community.

MSM Lisbon cohort is a study that began in April 2011 as part of the project CheckpointLX. This study targets HIV-negative MSM and it is the first longitudinal research program for MSM in Portugal. In this study are also involved CheckpointLX centre, GAT, the Department of Clinical Epidemiology, Predictive Medicine and Public Health of the Medicine School of University of Oporto, and several LGBT community partners.

In 2010, according to data from the National Institute of Health (INSA), 21.3% of HIV infection reported cases were in MSM. However, there are still insufficient data on HIV epidemic in MSM population in Portugal, reflecting negatively on our knowledge of the epidemic, in our capacity to initiate correct interventions for this population, and in our ability to cooperate with international reports and projects.

OBJECTIVES

The constitution of this cohort of HIV-negative MSM seeks to determine the incidence and risk factors for HIV infection in MSM, to identify strategies for follow-up necessary to have a retention of > 90% at 12 months, to evaluate barriers and facilitators of condom use, to characterize the sexual practices and changes in sexual behavior of MSM over time, and to create a group of MSM to assess the acceptability and feasibility of new prevention interventions and research.

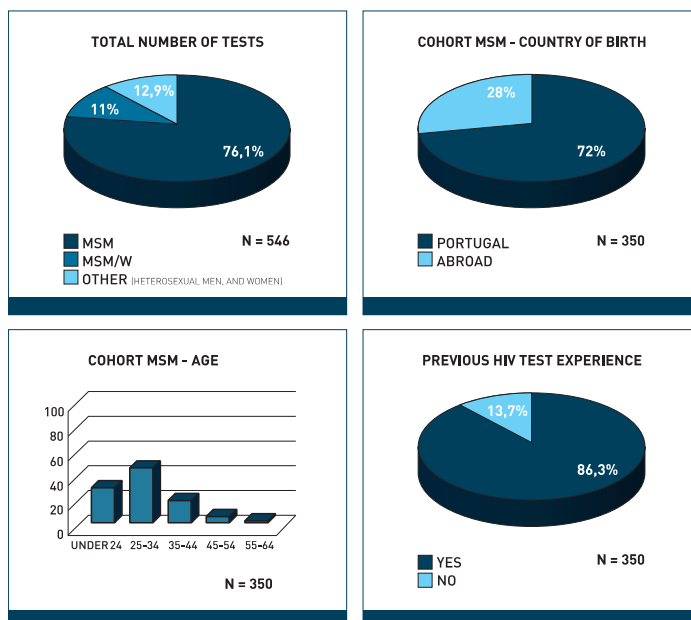
METHODS

The cohort consists of men who have sex with men and are HIV-negative. Recruitment is carried out in CheckpointLX during HIV screening sessions/counseling. Participants answer a questionnaire during the pre test counseling, which collects demographic and sexual practices data for the previous 12 months or since the last HIV screening in CheckpointLX. Participants are advised to return for screening every 6 months. A reactive result for HIV in a follow-up screening session is an exclusion criteria of the participant of the cohort.

RESULTS

From the 1st April to the 26th September 2011, 546 tests were done: 416 (76.1%) in MSM, 60 in MSM/W and 70 (12.8% in women and heterosexual men). There were 19 follow up tests, so we reached a total of tests in 457 MSM and MSM/W and 350 (76.6%) accepted to be part of the cohort.

Of the men in the cohort (n=350), the median of age was 30 years, with a standard deviation of 8.8 years. There were 252 (72%) portuguese men. In the first session of testing, 48 (13.7%) were having it for the first time. From the men with previous test experience, 68 (22.6%) had had the last test in 2011, 145 (48.2%) in 2010, 40 (13.3%) in 2009, 22 (7.3%) in 2008 and 8.6% before 2008 or did not answer.



CONCLUSION

This is a pioneer project in Portugal consisting of a longitudinal study directed specifically to the MSM population, similar to projects in other countries, in order to increase early detection of HIV infection, produce knowledge about HIV epidemic and enable the development of more effective HIV prevention strategies for MSM population.

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