

Original

Use of new technologies to notify possible contagion of sexually-transmitted infections among men



Dolors Carnicer-Pont^{a,b,c,*}, María Jesús Barbera-Gracia^d, Percy Fernández-Dávila^{a,e}, Patricia García de Olalla^{f,c}, Rafael Muñoz^{a,e}, Constanza Jacques-Aviñó^f, María Pilar Saladié-Martí^d, Mercè Gosch-Elcoso^d, Encarna Arellano Muñoz^d, Jordi Casabona^{a,b,c}

^a Centre of Epidemiological Studies of HIV/AIDS and STI of Catalonia (CEEISCAT) Catalan Institut of Oncology (ICO) -Public Health Agency of Catalonia (ASPCAT), Spain

^b Department of Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), Bellaterra, Spain

^c CIBER, Epidemiology and Public Health (CIBERESP), Spain

^d STI Unit, Special Programme Infectious Diseases Vall d'Hebron-Drassanes University Hospital Vall d'Hebrón, Barcelona, Spain

^e Stop Sida, Barcelona, Spain

^f Agència de Salut Pública de Barcelona (ASPB), Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 October 2014

Accepted 14 January 2015

Available online 21 February 2015

Keywords:

Sexually Transmitted Infection/HIV

Communication networks

Partner notification

Internet

ABSTRACT

Background: Among men who have sex with men (MSM), the association between searching for sexual partners' on the Internet and increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)/HIV infection, together with current low levels of partner notification (PN), justifies a study to explore the intention to use new communication technologies for PN in Spain.

Methods: Two cross-sectional surveys were performed: the first was administered online to visitors to web pages where the survey was advertised; the second was administered on paper to patients attending an STI Unit and centres similar to Community-Based Voluntary Counselling and Testing centres.

Results: The study population comprised 1578 Spanish residents (median age, 34 years [range: 18 to 74]); 84% lived in urban areas, and 69% reported searching for sexual partners on the Internet. Thirty-seven per cent would be willing to use a website for PN, 26% did not know if they would use one, and 37% would not want to use one. The main reasons for not intending to notify STI/HIV were "shame or fear" (stable partner) and "not knowing how to contact them" (casual partner). The preferred method of notification was face to face (73%) for both stable and casual partners, although using new technologies (Short Messaging System, e-mail, web page, phone applications) was widely accepted for notifying casual partners.

Conclusions: Fighting stigma and promoting alternative methods of PN among MSM and health professionals through new technologies could increase the frequency of PN. This approach will improve early detection and reduce transmission in Spain.

© 2014 SESPAS. Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. All rights reserved.

Uso de las nuevas tecnologías para la notificación del posible contagio de infecciones de transmisión sexual entre hombres

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

Infección de transmisión sexual/VIH

Redes de comunicación

Notificación a las parejas sexuales

Internet

Antecedentes: Entre los hombres que tienen sexo con hombres, la asociación entre buscar parejas por internet y el incremento de riesgo para presentar una Infección de Transmisión Sexual (ITS), junto con la baja frecuencia de la práctica de la notificación a las parejas sexuales expuestas a un infectado justifican explorar la intención de uso de las nuevas tecnologías para facilitar dicha notificación en España.

Métodos: Se han utilizado dos estudios transversales: el primero, administrado "online" a los visitantes de páginas web donde se publicitaba la encuesta; el segundo, administrado en formato papel en una Unidad Especializada de Atención a las ITS y otros centros similares a los de soporte y realización de pruebas.

Resultados: Participaron 1578 personas residentes en España, mediana de edad 34 años (Rango: 18- 74); 84% de áreas urbanas, 69% buscaron parejas sexuales en internet. Un treinta y siete por ciento utilizarían un página web si estuviera disponible, un 26% no sabían si lo harían y otro 37% no la utilizarían. Las razones principales para no tener la intención de notificar de ITS/VIH a una pareja estable fueron: "miedo o vergüenza"; a una pareja ocasional: "no saber cómo contactarla". El método preferido para notificar fue el "cara a cara o por teléfono" (73%), tanto en caso de pareja estable como ocasional. El uso de nuevas tecnologías (SMS, e-mail, web page, aplicaciones de teléfono) fue más aceptado en caso de pareja ocasional

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: dcarnice@gmail.com (D. Carnicer-Pont).

Conclusiones: La lucha contra el estigma y la promoción del uso de nuevas tecnologías para la notificación a las parejas sexuales, entre los hombres que tienen sexo con hombres (HSH) y por parte de los profesionales de la salud, pueden aumentar la notificación, con los beneficios esperados de una más temprana detección de casos y una reducción de la transmisión en España.

© 2014 SESPAS. Publicado por Elsevier España, S.L.U. Todos los derechos reservados.

Introduction

Partner notification (PN) is the process whereby the sexual partner(s) of a patient diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) who presents for care is identified and informed of his/her exposure. The partner(s) is then invited to attend for testing, counselling, and, where necessary, treatment.¹

Although several studies analyse interventions to prevent transmission of HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM)^{2–6} based on new information and communication technologies, most explore rates of HIV testing. Very few explore PN practices. Evidence-based reviews show the effectiveness of PN in identifying persons at risk of STIs/HIV infection,⁷ and the public health benefits of PN have recently been highlighted in Europe¹. Nevertheless, websites have been used to facilitate PN in Canada and the USA,⁸ Australia,⁹ Romania⁸, and the Netherlands.¹⁰

The results of studies evaluating one of these sites, “in SPOT”,^{11–13} are controversial. While some authors find limited evidence of its effectiveness for PN among MSM, others emphasize the higher accessibility to at-risk populations with Internet PN using pseudonyms¹⁴ and the broad acceptability of receiving and sending a notification e-mail^{15,16} or SMS.¹⁷

PN in Spain is by voluntary verbal notification from patients to partners following advice from a clinician. The increasing use of the Internet and other new communication technologies to seek sexual contacts highlights the potential for exploring how these technologies could facilitate PN and thus prevent transmission of STIs/HIV infection.¹⁸

Anonymous sexual partnering makes PN almost impossible; however, finding ways to optimize notification among traceable partners based on new communication technologies may increase the number of partners identified. In some Spanish autonomous communities, such as Catalonia, patient referral PN is already in place in the main STI Units, despite significant difficulties in regularly assessing the “yield” of PN in both MSM and heterosexuals. Nowadays, medical and public health practitioners are convinced of the need to strengthen and update this practice, using both traditional methods and new communication technologies (e-Cards, mobile phone, blogs, social networking sites).¹⁹

Internet-based PN methods for MSM have proved to be well accepted²⁰ and effective²¹ in the USA, although not much is known about their acceptability in Spain, or even in Europe.

Among MSM, the rise in the incidence of STIs²² and risky sexual behaviours, the association between searching for sexual partners' on the Internet and an increased risk of STIs,²³ and low levels of PN²⁴ justify a study to explore the intention to use new communication technologies for PN in Spain.

The aim of this study was to describe current PN practices and assess the intention to use new information and communication technologies for notifying partners of STI/HIV infection among MSM in Spain.

Methods

We conducted a survey that was administered in two formats. The first format was an online survey advertised on three web pages: one for sexual contacts (Chueca) (<http://www.chueca.com>),

an online magazine (Universo gay) (<http://www.universogay.com>) and a lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual web page for Barcelona (<http://www.stopsida.org>). The questionnaire was administered to participants throughout Spain using an online survey service (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>) from 27th June to 1st October 2013. The second format was a centre-based survey, which involved a pen and paper questionnaire and was offered at three different venues in Barcelona: an STI Unit, an HIV outreach program run by the Public Health Agency of Barcelona for the users of a gay sauna and a lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual social facility. Informed consent was obtained for both formats of the study.

The study measures and procedures were approved by the Clinical Research Ethics Committee of University Hospital Germans Trias i Pujol in Badalona, Catalonia, Spain.

This survey used a convenience sample of at least 100 questionnaires completed at the STI Unit, 50 at the lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual social facility and 50 at the HIV outreach program of the Public Health Agency of Barcelona.

Participants were recruited opportunistically when attending the centre and were eligible if they were 18 years of age or older, living in Spain and had had sex with another man any time in their lives.

Questionnaire development

We conducted two focus groups of 12 participants each (one with HIV-positive MSM and another with HIV-negative MSM). The duration of each focus group was two hours. Average age was 30 years in HIV-negative MSM and 45 years in HIV-positive MSM.

Data from the focus groups were analysed using the grounded theory approach to identify relevant questions.

The centre-based questionnaire was available in Catalan and Spanish and comprised 38 questions. The online questionnaire shared questions with another study exploring the acceptability of pre-exposure prophylaxis and circumcision as bio-behavioural methods of preventing HIV transmission. This questionnaire was only available in Spanish and comprised 86 questions, 38 of which were identical to those in the questionnaires administered in the centres.

Study variables

The sociodemographic variables were year and country of birth, region of residence, type of residence (urban or rural), level of education, occupation, sexual orientation, places where the patient socialized and number of sexual partners within the 12 months prior to a previous diagnosis of STI. The variables for STI/HIV history were self-reported previous STI, self-reported previous HIV test and self-reported HIV status. The questions used to explore the PN approach were as follows: Did you think of telling your partners about their exposure when you were diagnosed with an STI/HIV? Did you notify them? If you did not notify them, why not? How did you notify them? Do you intend to use new technologies to notify a partner about an STI or an HIV exposure? Does your view depend on the type of relationship (stable or casual)? What is your preferred method of notifying a partner about an STI or HIV exposure? What type of website would you prefer to use for PN?

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1073108>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1073108>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)