Human herpesvirus 8: seroprevalence and correlates in prostitutes in Mombasa, Kenya

Abstract:

Human herpesvirus 8 (HHV-8) infection is very prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, but the role of sexual transmission has not been well characterized. HHV-8 seroprevalence and correlates were evaluated in a cohort of female prostitutes in Mombasa, Kenya. Between February 1993 and January 2000, stored plasma samples taken from 736 women were tested, by whole-virus ELISA assay, for the presence of HHV-8 antibodies; of these 736 women, 633 were included in the analysis of correlates of HHV-8 infection; and, of these 633, 44.1% were seropositive for HHV-8 antibodies. In univariate analysis, age, years of education, years of prostitution, workplace, hormonal contraception, intrauterine-device use, alcohol consumption, syphilis, and gonorrhea were all significantly associated with the presence of HHV-8 antibodies. In a multivariate model, older age, fewer years of education, and 2 markers of high-risk sexual behavior-namely, alcohol consumption and gonorrhea-were each independently associated with HHV-8 seropositivity. These results suggest that heterosexual transmission may contribute to acquisition of HHV-8 infections in this African population of prostitutes.