

Sexually transmitted infections among HIV-1-discordant couples

Guthrie, BL; Kiarie, JN; Morrison, S; John-Stewart, GC; Kinuthia, J; Whittington, WL; Farquhar, C

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Abstract:

INTRODUCTION: More new HIV-1 infections occur within stable HIV-1-discordant couples than in any other group in Africa, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) may increase transmission risk among discordant couples, accounting for a large proportion of new HIV-1 infections. Understanding correlates of STIs among discordant couples will aid in optimizing interventions to prevent HIV-1 transmission in these couples. **METHODS:** HIV-1-discordant couples in which HIV-1-infected partners were HSV-2-seropositive were tested for syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and trichomoniasis, and HIV-1-uninfected partners were tested for HSV-2. We assessed sociodemographic, behavioral, and biological correlates of a current STI. **RESULTS:** Of 416 couples enrolled, 16% were affected by a treatable STI, and among these both partners were infected in 17% of couples. A treatable STI was found in 46 (11%) females and 30 (7%) males. The most prevalent infections were trichomoniasis (5.9%) and syphilis (2.6%). Participants were 5.9-fold more likely to have an STI if their partner had an STI ($P < 0.01$), and STIs were more common among those reporting any unprotected sex ($OR = 2.43$; $P < 0.01$) and those with low education ($OR = 3.00$; $P < 0.01$). Among HIV-1-uninfected participants with an HSV-2-seropositive partner, females were significantly more likely to be HSV-2-seropositive than males (78% versus 50%, $P < 0.01$). **CONCLUSIONS:** Treatable STIs were common among HIV-1-discordant couples and the majority of couples affected by an STI were discordant for the STI, with relatively high HSV-2 discordance. Awareness of STI correlates and treatment of both partners may reduce HIV-1 transmission