The Psychosocial Impact of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and Related Interventions Among Heterosexual Men (HSM) and Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM)

T. Christopher Mast,1 Carla Demuro-Mercon,2 Art Granger,3 Stephen Goldstone3,4

1Merck Research Laboratories, North Wales, PA; 2RTI Health Solutions, NC; 3Laser Surgery Care, NY, NY; 4Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, NY

Introduction

HPV Disease and Treatment is Complex from the Male Patient's Perspective

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<th>Possible Outcomes</th>
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<td>Treatment for Recurrence</td>
<td>Cryotherapy, Laser therapy, TCA, Podophyllin, Excision</td>
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<td>Anal Pap Smear</td>
<td>Normal, ASCUS, HSIL, LSIL</td>
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<td>Biopsy</td>
<td>Normal, squamous metaplasia, AIN1, AIN2, AIN3, Invasive Cancer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment for lesion</td>
<td>Cryotherapy, TCA, Electrocautery, Surgery</td>
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Methods

- Recruitment of male patients (n=47) with HPV condition or related intervention occurring within 3 months of interview
- Two main subject groups: HSM (n=20) and MSM (n=27)
- Recruited and interviewed in NYC surgical clinic from June 9 to September 11, 2003
- Conducted semi-structured interview with semi-structured interview guides in three diagnosis groups:
  - Genital warts
  - Abnormal anal Pap, no histology
  - High grade dysplasia
- Interviews were taped, transcribed and analyzed for dominant themes.

Study Objective

To characterize the psychosocial impact of HPV-related disease and interventions among heterosexual men (HSM) and men who have sex with men (MSM).

Study Design

- Individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted in a New York City surgical practice among five groups of men (total n=31) with various HPV-related diagnoses occurring within 3 months of interview: 1) HSM with genital warts; 2) MSM with penile warts; 3) MSM with anal warts; 4) MSM with abnormal anal and cervical cytology results without definitive histology; and 5) MSM diagnosed with high-grade dysplasia.

Results

- Most HSM and MSM considered genital warts to be a "nuisance" and high levels of anxiety about transmission to a partner or starting new sexual relationships were mentioned; both groups cited recurrences as "frustrating" or "disappointing.
- Compared to penile warts, anal warts had a high impact among MSM that triggered lifestyle changes, fears of cancer, worries about transmission, depression, negative image and concern about recurrence. Abnormal anal Pap had limited impact on body image or daily activities but anxiety or depression or the need to limit sexual activity were dominant themes. High-grade anal dysplasia caused MSMs to feel different about themselves. One man described feeling "substantially less sexy"; another felt "I've crossed a line [into STDs] and can never go back". Most MSM reported that the follow-up procedures (eg, biopsies) were uncomfortable, embarrassing, humiliating, and sometimes painful. Both HSM and MSM reported limited knowledge about HPV.

Conclusions: HPV-disease and related interventions appear to cause a degree of psychosocial burden in HSM and MSM.

Introduction

Previous Research Mostly Among Women Suggests Psychosocial Factors Related to HPV Disease

- Pap tests - Routine:
  - Embarrassment, worry, discomfort, nervousness, pain
- Pap tests - Abnormal:
  - Anxiety, worry, depression
- Colposcopy:
  - Anxiety, worry, depression, cognitive impairment
- Genital warts:
  - Similar to Pap-related factors, but also has impact on sexual activities
- Sexuality and Partnership: HSMs
  - Disclosure to partner was sometimes a concern
- Sexuality and Partnership: MSMs
  - Most felt that public is uneducated about HPV
  - A few men did not know how they acquired warts

Dominant Themes Emerged and Were Expressed Across Male Groups

- Limited knowledge about HPV
- Impact of conditions on sexuality and partnerships
- Worries and concerns about cancer
- Interest in an HPV vaccine

Respondents Reported Limited Knowledge About HPV in the Community

- HSM:
  - Unsure about possibility of transmission
  - A few men did not know how they acquired warts
  - Most felt that public is uneducated about HPV

- MSM:
  - Little knowledge about warts or HPV compared with attention given to HIV
  - Most MSM would not tell a casual sexual partner

Sexuality and Partnerships: HSM & MSM: HSIL

- MWA: "You want to throw up, especially being a very visual person myself, looking bad, and being a very perception-based and to not be perfect in a contagious way does horrible things to my emotional state. I haven't dated anyone since November 2002. I'm afraid of being rejected."  
- HSM: "At the exact moment I told her, we were being intimate. She was about to perform oral sex and I stopped her. I started to cry. I felt like a baby... We are still close. I told her I can't have oral sex..."

Sexuality and Partnships: Genital Warts

- MSM & HSM: MWA: "There are worse things I could get"  
  - Some: "unravel", "horrific", "alarmed"  
  - Wart Recurrence: "frustrating" or "disappointing"
- MSM: Anal warts had a higher impact than penile warts:
  - Triggered lifestyle changes
  - Fears of cancer
  - Depression

Sexuality and Partnerships: Abnormal Anal Paps

- MSM:
  - Limited impact reported on daily activities
  - Caused anxiety and depression
  - Some expressed that being luminous may "fear up" the herpes
  - Some concern about transmission to their partner
  - Some felt it was easier to deal with HPV

Worries and Concerns: Anal Dysplasia

- Anal dysplasia caused MSMs to feel different about themselves: "I've crossed a line [into STDs] and can never go back."
- Despite general satisfaction with medical care, follow-up procedures (eg, biopsies) were:
  - Uncomfortable
  - Embarrassing
  - Humiliating
  - Sometimes painful

Interest Expressed in an HPV Vaccine

- Most were interested in a vaccine now, but felt this was because they recently learned about HPV
- Questions raised about how the vaccine might help people if they were already infected

MSMs expressed belief that anal Paps would still be considered important if a vaccine was available

Patient Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>HSM (n=14)</th>
<th>MSM (n=9)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Age (Range)</td>
<td>30 (25-40)</td>
<td>33 (29-50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Pap tests</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Abnormal Pap</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% HSIL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% MWA</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sexual Expression and Relationship Factors

- Pap test results without definitive histology: 3) MSM diagnosed with high-grade dysplasia:
- MSM diagnosed with high-grade dysplasia:
  - MWA: "You want to throw up, especially being a very visual person myself, looking bad, and being a very perception-based and to not be perfect in a contagious way does horrible things to my emotional state. I haven't dated anyone since November 2002. I'm afraid of being rejected.

Discussion

- HPV disease and related interventions appear to cause a degree of psychosocial burden in HSM and MSM.
- Most HSM and MSM considered genital warts to be a "nuisance" and high levels of anxiety about transmission to a partner or starting new sexual relationships were mentioned. Both groups cited recurrences as "frustrating" or "disappointing."
- Compared to penile warts, anal warts had a high impact among MSM that triggered lifestyle changes, fears of cancer, worries about transmission, depression, negative image and concern about recurrence. Abnormal anal Pap had limited impact on body image or daily activities but anxiety or depression or the need to limit sexual activity were dominant themes. High-grade anal dysplasia caused MSMs to feel different about themselves. One man described feeling "substantially less sexy"; another felt "I've crossed a line [into STDs] and can never go back." Most MSM reported that the follow-up procedures (eg, biopsies) were uncomfortable, embarrassing, humiliating, and sometimes painful. Both HSM and MSM reported limited knowledge about HPV.
- Most felt that public is uneducated about HPV. A few men did not know how they acquired warts.
- MSM: Most felt that public is uneducated about HPV.
- MWA: "There are worse things I could get"  
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- Questions raised about how the vaccine might help people if they were already infected.

MSMs expressed belief that anal Paps would still be considered important if a vaccine was available.