Rectal Gonorrhea Is Linked to HIV Risk in Aussie Gay & Bi Men

Repeated cases of rectal gonorrhea were associated with an even higher risk of HIV.

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Among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Australia, contracting rectal gonorrhea, in particular doing so multiple times, is associated with a higher risk of acquiring HIV.

Publishing their findings in Open Forum Infectious Diseases, Brendan L. Harney, a research assistant in the Diseases Elimination Program at the Burnet Institute in Melbourne, led a research team that analyzed data on 8,941 MSM who between 2007 and 2014 attended primary care clinics in Melbourne with high caseloads of HIV. All the men had received at least two HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests.

A total of 227 (2.5%) of the men were diagnosed with HIV during the study's follow-up period. After adjusting the data to account for differences between the men in sexual behaviors, the investigators found that having been diagnosed with gonorrhea once was associated with a 2.09-fold increased risk for HIV, and being diagnosed with gonorrhea more than once was associated with a 6.27-fold increased risk of contracting the virus.

"Repeated and single rectal gonorrhea infections were independently associated with increased HIV infection risk," the study authors concluded. "These findings suggest that MSM with any history of rectal gonorrhea particularly repeat rectal gonorrhea, represent a group for whom preventive interventions for HIV should be emphasized."

To read the study abstract, click here.

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