

HIV Testing and Risk Behaviors among Injection Drug Users

L.E. Grau, E. Curtin, A. Rowhani-Rahbar, K.
Khoshnood, M. Singer, and R. Heimer

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•I-91 and Diffusion of Benefits Study Teams

Background

- CDC's new HIV prevention strategy advocates the centrality of expanded testing in controlling the HIV epidemic in the U.S.
- Goals of Expanded Testing:
 - 1) **increase in the proportion of people who are aware of their HIV status**
 - 2) **Knowledge of HIV status can promote positive behavioral change**
 - 3) Knowledge of HIV+ status can facilitate access to HIV/AIDS treatment

Purpose of the study

- To determine HIV testing patterns among injection drug users (IDUs) from our 2 previous studies
- To assess if expanded testing is likely to identify IDUs who may be infected with HIV
- To examine the association between knowing one's HIV status and risk behaviors among IDUs

Methodology

Merged dataset from two previous studies:

1. Diffusion of Benefits Study (DOB)
 - 1998 - 2000
 - Chicago IL; Hartford CT; Oakland CA
 - n = 560 IDUs
2. Syringe Access Use & Discard Study (I-91)
 - 1999 - 2002
 - New Haven and Hartford CT; Springfield MA
 - n = 983 IDUs

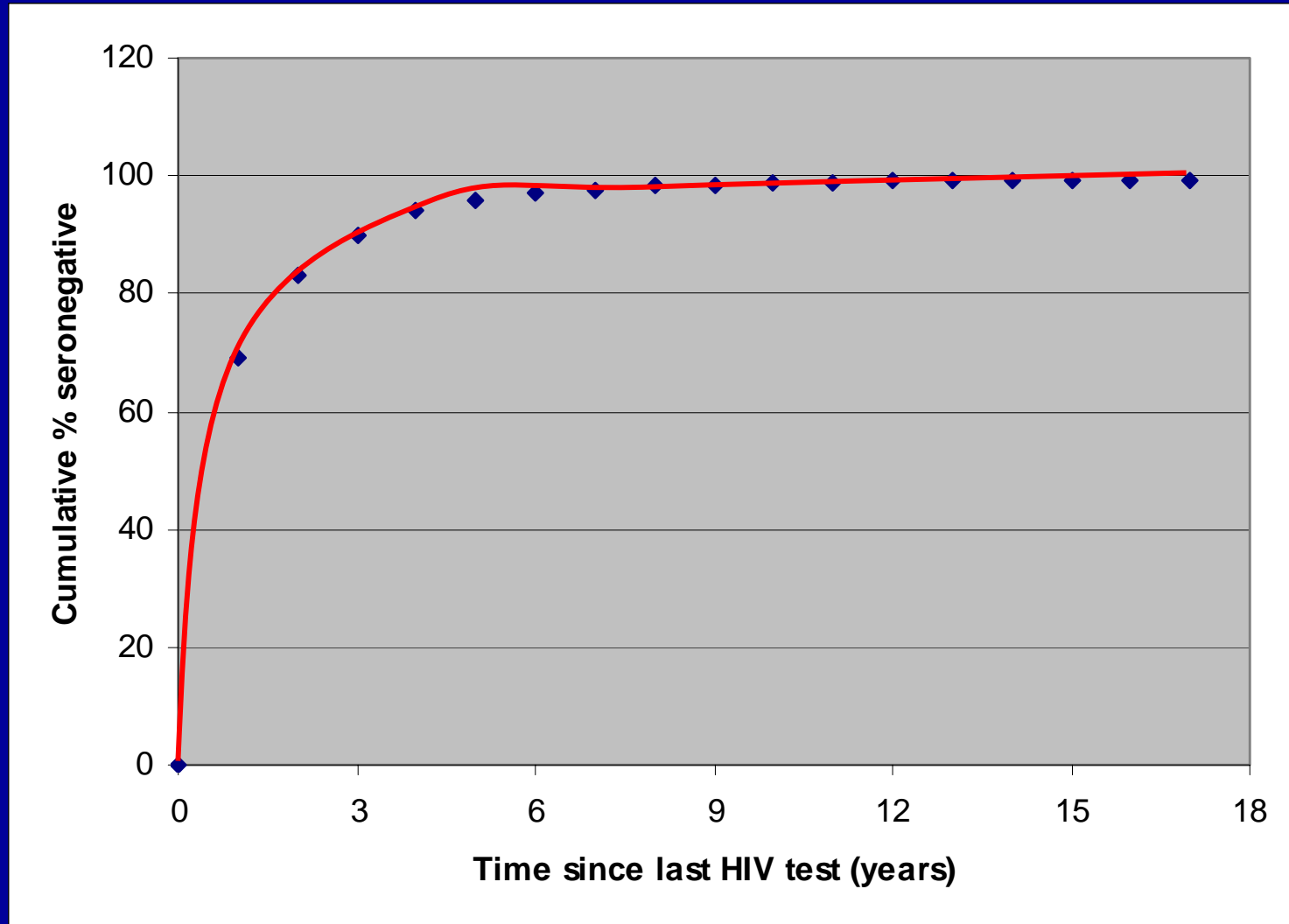
Sample Characteristics (N = 1543)

- Sex: Male = 65%
- Race/Ethnicity:
 - Hispanic: 42.1%
 - African American: 37%
 - White: 20%
- Age: 39.7 years (SD 8.4); range = 18-68
- Education: 54% High school graduate
- Syringe Exchange Customer: 30%

Ever tested for HIV ?

- Ever tested: 93%
 - Mean # times tested: 4.87 (SD 6.6)
 - Range: 1 – 100
 - Median: 3
 - Mode: 2
-
- **19% of those ever-tested reported being HIV-positive**

How long ago were HIV-seronegatives last tested?



More than 90% of participants reported having ever been tested; about 90% of them had been tested within the past 3 years.

Characteristics of those ever tested for HIV

- **Sex:** More females (96%) tested compared to males (92%) ($p < .01$)
- **Race/ethnicity:** More Whites tested (96%); less Hispanics tested (92%) ($p < .05$)
- **SEP customer status:** More customers (96%) tested compared to non-customers (92%) ($p < .001$)
- No significant differences noted for age or education

Relationship Between Having Been Tested & HIV Risk Behaviors ?

Self-reported behaviors of:

- sharing of syringes or drug-mixing water,
- syringe-mediated sharing,
- consistency in using condoms, and
- number of sexual partners in the past 30 days

were not associated with having ever having been tested for HIV.

HIV Sero-status & Demographics

- **Sex:** More males were HIV-positive (24%) than females (16%) ($p < .001$)
- **Race/Ethnicity:** ($p < .001$)
 - Hispanic: 26% seropositive
 - African American: 24% seropositive
 - White: 10% seropositive
- **Age:** HIV seropositives were ~1 year older ($p < .01$)
- **Education:** Fewer high school graduates were seropositive (18%) than non-grads (24%) ($p < .01$)
- **SEP customers:** No significant differences noted by SEP status

HIV serostatus & risk behaviors

(past 30 days)

- **Total # injections:** HIV seropositives injected more often ($p < .03$)
- **Syringe-mediated sharing:** More HIV seropositives reported sharing (26%) than did seronegatives (16%) ($p < .001$)
- **Condom use:** More HIV positives reported consistent use (63%) than did seronegatives (37%) ($p < .001$)
- **Indirect sharing (drug-water mixture):** No significant differences between HIV+s and HIV-s
- **Multiple sex partners:** No significant differences between HIV+s and HIV-s

Summary

- Overwhelming majority of drug users were tested within the past 3 years
- We found no association between current HIV risk behaviors and a history of HIV testing
- HIV+ IDUs reported more injection frequency but less syringe sharing than HIV- IDUs
- HIV + IDUs reported higher levels of consistent condom use compared with HIV-s IDUs

Conclusion

- It is unlikely that new campaigns to increase HIV testing will identify appreciably more HIV cases in this population than the current testing programs.
- History of testing was not associated with current reduction in HIV risk behaviors among drug users
- The relationship between HIV risk behavior and HIV positive status among drug users needs further analysis