“Playing with fire”:
Decrease in safe-sex attitudes among men who have sex with men in a Portuguese STI clinic

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Background

- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) present a major public health concern and a global cause of illness in both industrialized and developing countries
  - Portugal is no exception, with an increasing incidence of STIs, and one of the highest prevalences of HIV in Europe
- Reduced risk perceptions among men who have sex with men (MSM) and a consequent high-risk sexual behaviour have been increasingly reported throughout the world

Objective: To characterize the population of MSM attending a STI clinic in Lisbon, and to assess practice of condom use among these patients

Method: Records of all MSM patients attending the clinic from 2008 to 2011 were reviewed
1. Demographic data:

- Median age 32.4 years old (from 17 to 62)
- 76.9% Portuguese men, 20.4% Brasilian
- 71.4% high-school or above education
2. Sexual behaviours:

- Partners in the previous 6 months:
  - None: 4.6%
  - 2-3: 17.6%
  - 4-5: 15.7%
  - >5: 19.4%
  - One: 42.6%

- Previous history of STD:
  - No: 38%
  - Yes: 62%

- 1 sex worker (0.9%), 9 assumed sex with sex workers (8.3%)

48.6% HIV+ MSM vs 16.6% Heterosexual (p<0.001)
Results

2. Sexual behaviours:

- Condom use

61.7% MSM vs 77.3% Heterosexual ($p=0.008$)
2. Sexual behaviours:

- Condom use:
  - 54.5% of HIV+ MSM do not always use condom, of which 45.8% were not under HAART
  - 49% of HIV+ MSM have multiple partners, of which 68% do not consistently use condom
  - “Always”: 80.6% presented with STDs, namely early syphilis and condylomata acuminata
in Conclusion:

- High-risk sexual behaviours are increasingly prevalent in this MSM population (and possibly underestimated), despite previous educational programmes
- The high incidence of risk behaviours among HIV infected patients is particularly worrisome
- Innovative interventions and subpopulation-based educational programs are needed