

Changes in Smoking Status among a Longitudinal Cohort of Gay, Bisexual, and other Men who Have Sex with Men in Vancouver, Canada

Cigarette smoking remains a serious public health concern and gbMSM are more likely to smoke than the general population.

What is the BC-CfE Momentum Health Study?

Evidence from British Columbia and elsewhere has demonstrated that expansion of access to antiretroviral HIV treatment (ART) can result in population-level reductions in HIV incidence. This is the concept behind the made-in-BC Treatment as Prevention® strategy, or TasP®, which aims to expand early HIV testing and treatment to improve patients' health and curb the spread of HIV. Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) represent the most affected HIV risk group, both in BC and Canada. The BC-CfE Momentum Health Study is designed to measure changes in HIV risk behaviour, attitudes toward TasP® and the proportion of HIV-positive gbMSM with unsuppressed viral load over time in the Vancouver region. The study uses respondent-driven sampling (RDS) to obtain a more representative sample reflecting the diversity of the gbMSM community in Vancouver.

FACT BOX

Cigarette smoking is common among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM). Roughly 28–50% of North American gbMSM report smoking. gbMSM who are living with HIV are more likely to smoke than those who are HIV-negative. Much of the mortality gap between HIV-negative gbMSM individuals and those living with HIV is attributable to smoking.

What are the key study findings?

- 774 gbMSM completed the study and participants were categorized as being a 'never smoker', 'non-daily smoker', 'daily smoker' or 'former smoker'.
- At the beginning of the study, 31.5% of participants were daily smokers, 29.9% were former smokers, 17.7% were non-daily smokers and 21% reported never smoking cigarettes regularly.
- gbMSM living with HIV were more likely to smoke and less likely to quit than HIV-negative gbMSM. This is an important finding because mortality rates are much higher among people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) who smoke, even among those who are on treatment and are virally suppressed.
- Daily smokers were more likely to report a history of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, depression, anxiety/panic attacks, bipolar disorder, alcohol dependency and other substance dependency.
- Quitting smoking was more likely among those who reported higher incomes and excellent health.
- Quitting smoking was less likely among those who reported alcohol and substance use and among those who had a partner who smokes.



What do these findings mean?

- Smoking prevalence was high in this sample of gbMSM, particularly among PLWHA.
- There is a need for more resources to assist gbMSM with quitting smoking; including sexual partners in such programs may increase likelihood of their success.
- Smoking cessation programs need to be culturally relevant for gbMSM and should consider the needs and elevated risk for PLWHA.
- Long-term examination of changes in smoking patterns is important for addressing risk factors and implementing adequate public health interventions.
- An understanding of factors associated with smoking status can be useful for campaigns and programs to support smoking reduction within the gbMSM population.

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