

Community Engagement and HIV/Syphilis Testing among High-Risk MSM in China: a Cross-Sectional Online Survey

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INTRODUCTION

- In China, generic HIV/syphilis testing campaigns have had little effect on promoting testing among men who have sex with men (MSM), who face a high disease burden in addition to barriers to health care.¹⁻³
- Community engagement, the process of working collaboratively with groups of people affiliated by a common cause, has been increasingly used to generate more MSM-centered interventions.⁴⁻⁵
- However, most studies on community engagement have been conducted in settings that bear little resemblance to the socio-cultural context in China, where a growing network of community-based organizations (CBOs) still operates in a constrained environment.⁴⁻⁶
- Research is needed to better understand the relationship between community engagement and testing in the Chinese context. Such insights can inform the development of more culturally appropriate and community responsive interventions.

OBJECTIVES

- To describe community engagement and other potential correlates of HIV/syphilis testing among high-risk MSM in China.
- To assess HIV/syphilis testing rates among a subgroup of MSM who are among the most-at-risk.

METHODS

- MSM ≥ 16 years old who had condomless sex in the past 3 months were recruited nationwide to complete an online survey in November 2015.
- Recruitment took place through banner advertisements on major social networking platforms, including a mobile messaging app, a microblogging website, and a large gay dating app.
- A 6-item community engagement questionnaire was administered and tested for underlying categories using exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

6-item community engagement questionnaire and underlying levels

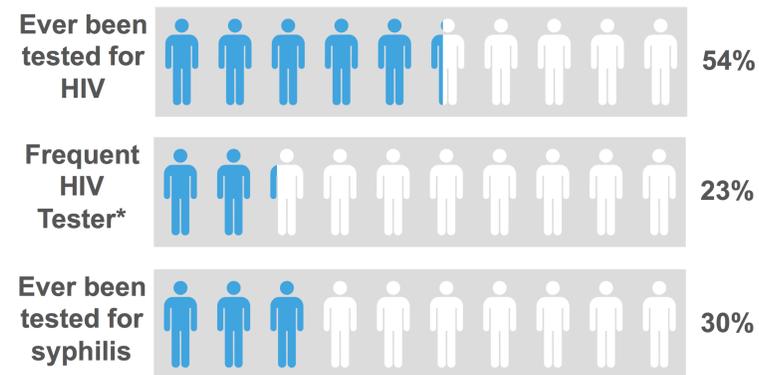
- Q1) Have you ever participated in online discussions on HIV/STI testing or sexual health?
- Q2) Are you aware of any ongoing community events promoting sexual health among MSM?
- Q3) Have you ever encouraged someone else to test for HIV/STIs?
- Q4) Have you ever accompanied someone to a testing facility to test for HIV/STIs?
- Q5) Have you ever helped organize a sexual health campaign among MSM?
- Q6) Have you ever volunteered to help provide sexual health services among MSM?

Minimal Moderate Substantial

- Results of the EFA suggest a spectrum of community engagement categorized into three levels, with “minimal engagement” being mostly passive styles of engagement while “substantial engagement” involving more active styles.
- The relationship between community engagement level and HIV/syphilis testing was explored using multivariable logistic regression.

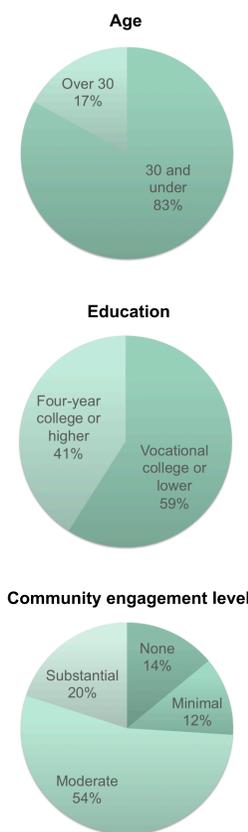
RESULTS

Part 1. HIV/syphilis testing history among high-risk MSM (N=1189)

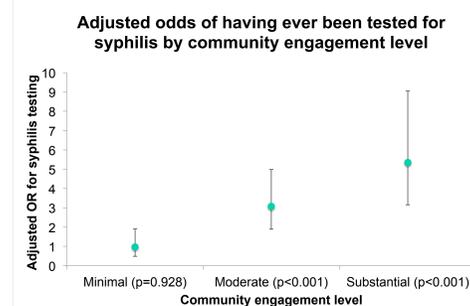
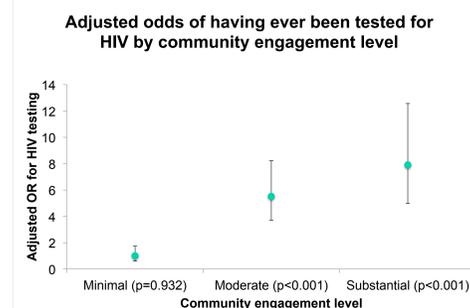


*Frequent HIV tester is defined as having tested at least once every 6 months.

Part 2. Sociodemographic and community engagement characteristics among high-risk MSM (N=1189)



Part 3. Multivariable models of associations between HIV/syphilis testing history and community engagement level



RESULTS (CONT.)

- Among the 1189 high-risk MSM, 54% (647/1189) of men had ever been tested for HIV and 30% (354/1189) had ever been tested for syphilis.
- Factor analysis suggested three levels of community engagement within the 6-item scale (minimal, moderate, and substantial) and this model explained 70.7% of the observed variance.
- A quarter (26%, 312/1189) reported none to minimal engagement, over one half (54%, 644/1189) reported moderate engagement, and a fifth (20%, 233/1189) reported substantial engagement.
- Multivariable logistic regression showed that greater community engagement was associated with higher odds of having ever been tested for HIV and for syphilis, and of having been frequently tested for HIV.

CONCLUSION

- HIV and syphilis testing are suboptimal among a particularly vulnerable subgroup of high-risk MSM in China.
- MSM with greater community engagement were more likely to have ever been tested for HIV and syphilis, with the greatest increase in testing occurring among men with active, in-person styles of engagement.
- Interventions aimed at improving testing should incorporate community-level components that engage MSM, such as online discussions or in-person events related to HIV/STI testing or sexual health.
- More research is needed to explore how community engagement may be utilized to improve intervention development and delivery among key populations.

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