



SEXUAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH CARE SEEKING BEHAVIOUR IN HIV INFECTED AND UNINFECTED OLDER ADULTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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BACKGROUND

Poor service provision or the lack of services pertaining to sexual health is a common occurrence in older adults (Aboderin, 2014)

Marginalization and excluded in access to SRH alongside persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and migrants (Sexual Rights Initiative, 2013)

Influenced by societal perceptions of older adults as being no longer sexually active and thus not in need of SRH (Minichiello et. al., 2011; Scherrer, 2009)

In SA, over 30% of older adults are not reached by SRH compared to 10% (15-24) and 16% (25-49) years (Shisana et al., 2009)

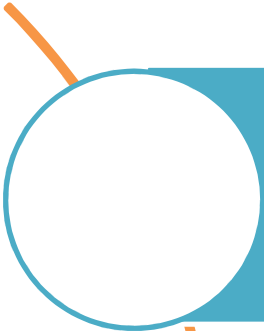


STUDY AIM

To examine sexual behaviour among HIV-infected and uninfected men and women aged 50 years and above; and to describe health seeking behaviour with regards to sexual needs by HIV status and gender



METHODS



Data are from “study to investigate sexual health, HIV and co-morbidity with non-communicable infections among Older Persons” (SHIOP).



SHIOP between Feb-May 2016 in Durban area



Inclusion criteria was: being aged 50 years and above; willing and able to provide written informed consent; able to communicate in English or IsiZulu; and not terminally ill or cognitively impaired.



STUDY PROCEDURES

- Ppts completed a questionnaire on socio-demographics, sexual behavior, medical history and tested for HIV
- HIV testing was performed using two rapid Determine HIV-1/2 (Abbott Laboratories, Japan) and Unigold™ Recombigen® HIV
- Participants were asked if currently sexually active (Yes/No); Number of sexual partners in 12 months; or reasons for lack of sexual activity
- Participants interviewed in private and confidentiality maintained
- Ethical approval from SAMRC Ethics Committee



STATISTICAL ANALYSES

- Descriptive analysis was done using frequency tables and charts.
- Errors, outliers, and missing data were assessed and corrected where necessary.
- Statistical significance assessed using chi-square and Fisher's Exact test for categorical and t-tests for continuous variables.
- Logistic regressions were used to examine correlates of sexual activity at 5% significance level.
- Data were analyzed using STATA 13.1 software.

RESULTS

Descriptive characteristics of study participants

- 435 older adults enrolled across two sites.
- Median age 61(range 50-90)
- Majority were women (71%); African; Christian; had primary-level education; widowed (41%); currently married (49%).
- Only 10% were formally employed or self-employed
- Finally, 16% were HIV infected; no significant difference between women and men (17% vs 15%, $p=0.638$), respectively.

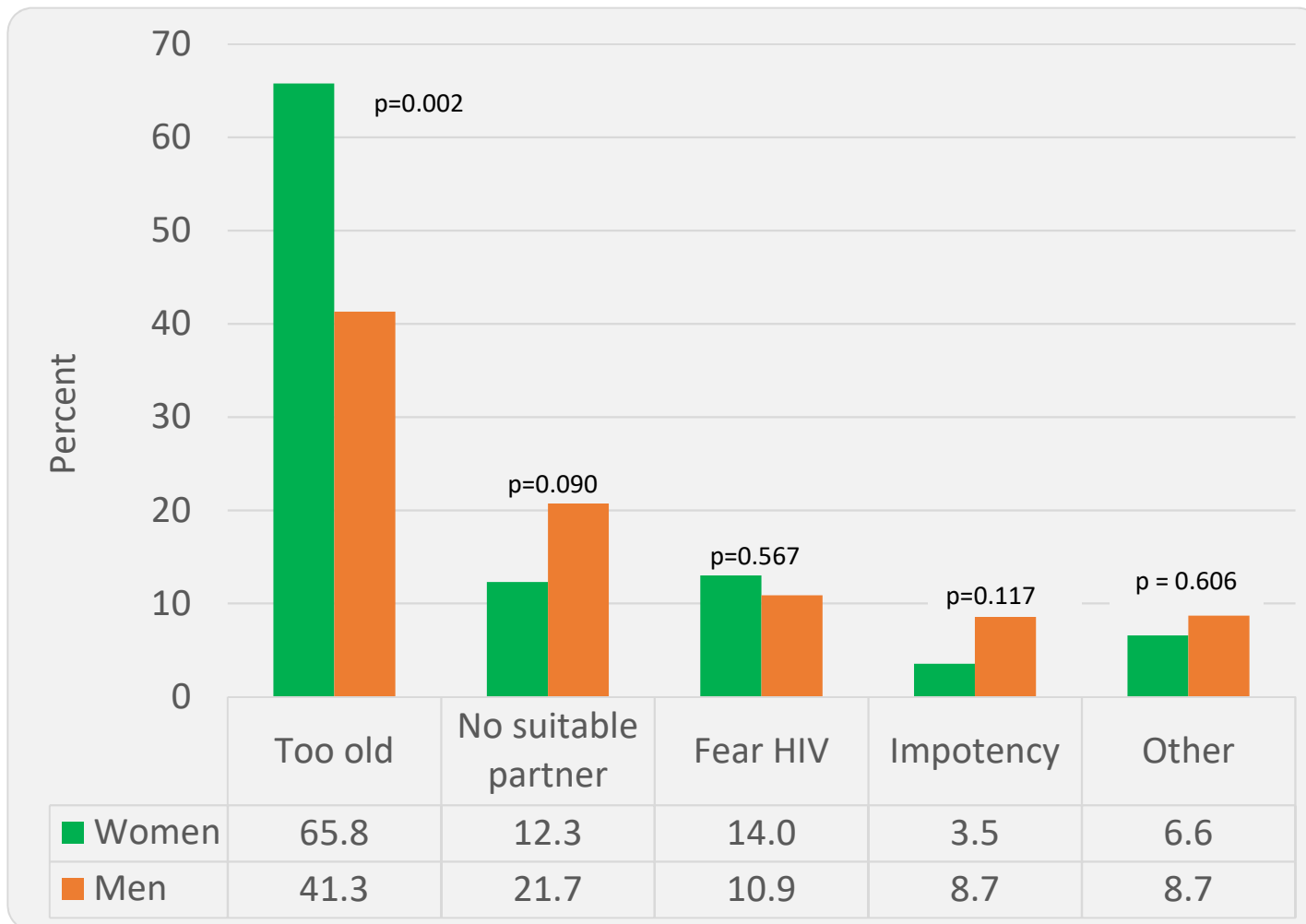
	Total %	Female %	Male %
N	435	307	128
Median age in years	61	60	62
Marital status			
Never been married	24	25	22
Married/Co-habit	36	28	54
Widowed/Divorced	40	47	24
African			
Christian	78.4	85.0	62.5
Education			
Never been to school	15	16	13
Primary	50	52	45
Secondary or higher	35	32	42
Unemployed			
Government grants recipient	68.7	70.7	64.1
HIV Positive	16.1	16.7	14.8

SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN OLDER ADULTS

Variable	Sexually Inactive		Sexually Active		Statistics
	N	%	N	%	p-value
N	274	63.0	161	37.0	
Gender					<0.001
Women	228	74.3	79	25.7	
Men	46	35.9	82	64.1	
Age group					<0.001
50-59	105	52.0	97	48.0	
60-69	110	68.3	51	31.7	
70+	59	81.9	13	18.1	
Population group					0.140
Non-African	61	57.0	46	43.0	
African	213	64.9	115	35.1	
Marital status					<0.001
Never married	79	73.1	29	26.9	
Currently married	40	30.1	93	69.9	
Widowed/Divorced	148	85.5	25	14.5	
Education					0.081
Never been to school	47	71.2	19	28.8	
Primary	143	65.6	75	34.4	
Secondary +	81	55.1	66	44.9	
Employment					0.005
Employed	18	50.0	18	50.0	
No	245	66.2	125	33.8	
HIV status					0.768
Negative	231	63.3	134	36.7	
Positive	43	61.4	27	38.6	

- We found 37% (n=161) of older adults were sexually active
- More men (64%) than women (26%) were sexually active.
- Sexual activity declined with increasing age
- Sexual activity higher among non-African pts
- Sexual activity highest if married or cohabiting
- Sexual activity highest among employed pts
- No significant difference in sexual activity between HIV infected and uninfected pts (p=0.768)

REASONS FOR LACK OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY





SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR BY GENDER AND HIV

- Men reported a higher number of partners in the last 12 months than women ($p < 0.001$); and number of lifetime sexual partners
- By HIV status, HIV-infected older adults were more likely than their HIV-uninfected peers to report multiple partners in the past year (18.5% vs 5.2%, $p = 0.016$).
- HIV-infected ppts more likely to have had 4 or more life time partners (40.7% vs 28.1, $p = 0.009$).
- Current condom use higher in men (49%) than women (32%), ($p = 0.04$).
- Ever used condoms higher in HIV-infected than uninfected ppts (81.5% VS 32.4%, $p = 0.020$).



HEALTH SEEKING FOR SEXUAL HEALTH AND NEEDS BY OLDER ADULTS

- Only one in ten pts had sought health care for their sexual needs
- No statistically significant differences between older women and men re sexual health seeking (8.5% vs 12.5%, $p=0.195$).
- Men more likely to have consulted in last 12 months, but for most women it was over 5 years ago.
- Ppts who were sexually active than inactive were more likely to have consulted a health care worker about their sexual health (16.1% vs 5.8%, $p<0.001$).



DISCUSSION

We found a high proportion of older adults to be sexually active

We found sexual activity varied significantly by age, gender, employment and marital status.

HIV positive and HIV negative older adults equally likely to be sexually active



DISCUSSION

We found HIV-infected ppts to be associated with riskier sexual behaviours such as having higher number of lifetime partners, more likely to have a non-marital partner, and low condom use

This risk taking behaviour may stem from a misconception that older adults are not at risk of HIV acquisition

The low sexual health care seeking, and lack of sexual health services tailored to older adults needs urgent research and policy response

conclusions

Highlighted sexual activity and sexual health seeking behaviour of older adults at the epicentre of the HIV epidemic

Contrary to misconceptions and ageist stereotypes, we find a high level of sexual activity in both HIV-positive and HIV-negative ppts, especially older men, with some highly risky behaviour patterns, but very low health seeking behaviour regarding sexual health

Just as there are concerted efforts for 'youth friendly' services, there is a need for 'older adults friendly' sexual health services

There is need to educate older adults on safer sexual practices, HIV prevention options available to them and to seek sexual healthcare for sexual and reproductive health and rights



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