



University  
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# Sources of HIV awareness reported by recent seroconverters

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# New seroconverter =

- Testing HIV+ within the year plus:
  - Telling a counselor that the previous HIV test was negative and less than one year ago or having a record of negative results less than one year ago
  - Having tested for HIV over a year ago, but whose only high risk event was within the last year.
  - confirmatory test result indicates an acute or early HIV seroconversion (Western Blot = Inconclusive; Western Blot = Indeterminate with p24 antigen positive) or recent seroconversion (typical Western Blot and/or antigen pattern).

# Demographics

- N = 51
- Drawn from 2 downtown Toronto clinics with highest testing rates for HIV
- All male
- 43 gay, 5 bisexual, 2 heterosexual, 1 other
- Mean age: 32; range 21-59
- 30 single, 14 boyfriend/partner, 4 husband, 2 wife, 1 divorced
- Education: 11 high school or less, 13 some postsecondary, 27 completed college/university or postgraduate
- Ethnicity: Canadian 23, British 11, other European 14, Caribbean 7, Latin American 6, E/SE Asian 5, S Asian 5, African 3
- Median income: <\$20,000/yr



## Answers to the questions:

- How did you find out about HIV before being diagnosed?
- Have you ever picked up HIV information from an AIDS organization, called them, or seen a campaign?



## Reported by 7-9 each

- having an HIV+ friend or partner
- the public sphere or common knowledge
- internet searches

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- Friends that are positive, media. Growing up as a gay male, it's actually pretty prominent. I used to volunteer with various pride organizations and stuff like that.
  - I knew a little bit. I had a roommate who was back with like my second boyfriend who was staying with us.... He was recently diagnosed with HIV so anything I learned, I learned through him.
  - I'm 58. You'd have to be living under a rock not to have come across it....I saw the whole thing from whatever the initial acronym was through to the attempts by authorities to shut down gay sex period just to prevent the spread of infection. It would have been impossible for me not to have learned something along the way.

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- I didn't know a whole lot about it. I've learned a lot about it since. I knew that a lot of people died of it in 80s. What I know is what I've seen on TV and the small bits I've read about,...Here [clinic] and also reading online, watching documentaries about it, reading medical literature.
  - It was something I totally did not understand, and being gay you kind of hear a lot of stuff that you're not really sure. For me, I wanted to know more about it because I said, "You know what? I could be living with it and not know it, I haven't been tested in the last year.".. so I do a lot of research online



## Reported by 4-5 each

- school, ASO affiliation or campaigns,
- education in a home country before emigration
- through friends, community, family, and peers.

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- I found out through school and my sex education class.
  - I was in medical school, so of course I know it, right?
  - I thought it was such a slap in my face, that I got infected, because I worked ...for a ...project which was around HIV AIDS awareness, like specifically targeting youth. I went around with all these demonstrations and all this information and all this literature and then I got infected. So that was, I think, one of the hardest parts to deal with.
  - I knew a lot. That's why I'm like, is this happening to me? I knew a lot because still in high school [in Latin America] we had school things to do, presentations.

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- Like I've had that speech [to wear condoms] my whole life. My mom asked me my whole life, 'Are you gay?' and that's why I got mad and it was just like, 'Yeah mom, I'm bisexual. Are you happy?'
  - Well having bareback sex, you have to educate yourself and meeting people online. I have been lectured left, right and center, you know, by everybody, young, old, it doesn't matter and good for them, you know what I mean?



## Reported by 2-3 each

- having limited HIV awareness because of being heterosexual or only recently coming out of a heterosexual relationship
- previous pre-test counselling in clinics

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- I've always just known to kind of like be safe and try not to have so many sexual partners because of that. So it's like I kind of always tried to stay away from that gay scene kind of.... But these were supposedly with other straight men, I would never use condoms.
  - Just aware. It's HIV. It's been around a long time right. I was trying to get more information from all these guys that I was meeting that were HIV+. That was all new to me. I never really met guys that were HIV+. I was living pretty much a straight life with mostly women and stuff.
  - Through some of the you know counselors here when I'd get an HIV test done. They'd say, 'Well why are you having the test?' and I'd say, 'Well because I was bad.' They would start to give you some of the statistics. Even just picking up some of the safer sex brochures and stuff like that.

# The research team

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