STIs and HIV Are on the Rise in London Gay Men

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Gay and bisexual men in London, England, are in the middle of rising twin epidemics of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), aidsmap reports. A Public Health England report on the sexual health of men who have sex with men (MSM) in the capital finds that although MSM are less than 2 percent of London's adult population, they account for 24 percent of local STI diagnoses in the past year.

Sixty-five percent of London's gonorrhea diagnoses and 84 percent of syphilis cases were among MSM. These STIs are on the rise among MSM, a phenomenon that may be due in part to improvements in testing technologies. The recent past has also seen outbreaks of STIs such as lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV), shigella and sexually-transmitted hepatitis C virus among London MSM.

HIV diagnoses rose by 28 percent among London MSM between 2003 and 2012. Today, 51 percent of new diagnoses are among MSM. While 1 in 34 of MSM in the United Kingdom are living with the virus, in London that figure is 1 in 12.

In the report, Public Health England examines various contributing factors to these epidemics. A significant minority of MSM in London have a high number of sexual partners. About half of the city's MSM report engaging in anal sex without a condom. Serosorting is common, and the condomless intercourse between HIV-positive men is leading to very high rates of STIs among them. Recreational drug use also likely plays a part in fueling the spread of STIs and HIV. Also, too few men are getting tested for HIV frequently enough.

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

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