Socio-Demographic Characteristics of a Population of HIV/AIDS Seropositive Individuals Receiving Care through Five Demonstration Sites along the U.S.-Mexico Border

The purpose of this report is to provide a description of personal lifestyles and demographic characteristics of 1200 HIV seropositive individuals who volunteered to participate in a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS) Initiative conducted in five U.S. demonstration projects located along the U.S.-Mexico border between 2001 and 2004. The results show HIV/AIDS patients receiving care along the U.S.-Mexico border are predominantly Hispanics (81%) and men who have sex with men (56%). In general, SPNS participants appear to be socio-demographically similar to the general HIV/AIDS population in the U.S. with a few noted exceptions such as age, labor force participation, and variations in mode of transmission by age and gender.

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INTRODUCTION

In response to social, economic and health needs arising from the rapid growth of the Hispanic population along the U.S.-Mexico border, the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB), Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS), funded five demonstration sites under the U.S.- Mexico Border HIV/AIDS Health Initiative. The purpose of the initiative was to increase access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS care and reduce structural, socio-economic and cultural barriers that limit early detection of HIV disease among permanent and migrant residents along the border (HRSA, 2000). Here, we provide a general description of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH/A) who reside along the U.S.-Mexico border and who received services from one of the five SPNS sites between January 01, 2001 and November 30, 2004.

METHOD

Study population. The target population consisted of PLWH/A who were receiving primary HIV/AIDS medical services from five HRSA, HIV/AIDS Bureau, SPNS Border Health demonstration sites located in Harlingen and El Paso, Texas; Las Cruces, New Mexico; San Diego, California and Tucson, Arizona.

Measurement tools. Two uniform closed-ended data collection modules designed to measure information on demographic and lifestyle characteristics were used across all five SPNS sites. The instruments used in this study are available from the authors on request or at http://www.ou.edu/border/.

These modules were completed during face-to-face interviews conducted by bilingual SPNS staff between January 01, 2001 and November 30, 2004. Sites were responsible for interview training following the methodology and standards established by the collaborative. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or English depending on the language preference of the participant. The questionnaires were first developed in English. Professional staff at the University of Texas – El Paso, Department of Languages and Linguistics first translated the study instruments to Spanish and then back translated into English. At the end of the study period, a second back translation was conducted by a Spanish speaker who closely resembled the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants to ensure consistency in meaning and congruence in responses between Spanish and English items. Variables with inconsistent translations between the Spanish and English versions were removed from the database.

RESULTS

A total of 1200 HIV/AIDS patients receiving care in the five border sites agreed to participate in the study between 2001 and 2004. The participants were between 19 and 73 years of age at intake into services and predominantly male (1003, 83.6%). Nine hundred and seventy (80.8%) self-identified as Hispanics followed by 194 (16.2%) as White non-Hispanic, 29 (2.4%) as African American non-Hispanic and less than one percent as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Pacific Islander or Other. Slightly more than 60 percent (n = 712, 60.3%) of the participants reported their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Among participants of Hispanic origin, 812 (83.7%) were male, and 567 (59.3%) self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

References

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Table 1a. Socio-demographic characteristics: Comparison of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants from all five sites regarding socio-behavioral characteristics.

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Ethnicity		
	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic Descent	
	n (%)	n (%)	Diff (CI)*
Gender Male	191 (83.0)	812 (83.7)	-0.7 (-6.1 – 4.7)
Female	39 (17.0)	158 (16.3)	-0.7 (-14.7 – 6.1)
Age (in years) 19 – 29	25 (10.9)	191 (19.7)	-8.8 (-13.5 – -4.1)
30 – 39	92 (40.0)	413 (42.6)	-2.6 (-9.7 – 4.5)
40 – 49	82 (35.7)	253 (26.1)	9.6 (2.8 – 16.4)
50 +	31 (13.5)	113 (11.7)	1.8 (-3.1 – 6.7)
Marital Status Single	120 (52.4)	542 (56.1)	-3.7 (-10.9 – 3.5)
Married/live with someone	69 (30.1)	282 (29.2)	0.9 (-5.7 – 7.5)
Separated/Divorced/ Widowed/Other	40 (17.5)	142 (14.7)	2.8 (-2.6 – 8.2)
Employment Status Employed at some level	65 (28.3)	369 (38.0)	-9.7 (-16.3 – -3.1)
Unemployed but seeking	40 (17.4)	203 (20.9)	-3.5 (-9.0 – 2.0)
Not in Labor Force (including retired and disabled)	125 (54.4)	398 (41.0)	13.4 (6.3 – 20.5)

*Indicates difference in proportion between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic participants with a 95% confidence interval.

Table 1b. Sexual orientation and mode of exposure: Comparison of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants from all five sites regarding socio-behavioral characteristics.

Sexual Orientation and Mode of Exposure	Ethnicity		
	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic Descent	
	n (%)	n (%)	Diff (CI)*
Sexual Orientation Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	145 (64.4)	567 (59.3)	5.1 (-1.9 – 12.1)
Heterosexual	80 (35.6)	389 (40.7)	-5.1 (-21.6 – -8.6)
Males Only Gay/Bisexual	141 (75.0)	562 (70.3)	4.7 (-2.3 – 11.7)
Heterosexual	47 (25.0)	237 (29.7)	-4.7 (-11.7 – 2.3)
Females Only Lesbian/Bisexual	4 (10.8)	5 (3.2)	7.6 (-2.8 – 18.0)
Heterosexual	33 (89.2)	152 (96.8)	-7.6 (-18.0 – 2.8)
Mode of Exposure MSM	115 (50.0)	559 (57.6)	-7.6 (-14.8 – -.04)
Heterosexual	56 (24.4)	289 (29.8)	-5.4 (-11.9 – .09)
IDU including MSM and MSW**	39 (17.0)	70 (7.2)	9.8 (4.7 – 14.9)
Other (blood trans, comp., tissue, rape, mom to child, etc)	20 (8.7)	52 (5.4)	3.3 (-0.6 – 7.2)
Males Only MSM	115 (60.2)	559 (68.8)	-8.6 (-16.2 – -1.0)
Heterosexual	24 (12.6)	156 (19.2)	-6.6 (-12.0 – -1.2)
IDU including MSM and MSW**	33 (17.3)	59 (7.3)	10 (4.3 – 15.7)
Other (blood trans, comp., tissue, rape, mom to child, etc)	19 (9.9)	38 (4.7)	4.9 (0.7 – 9.7)
Females Only Heterosexual	32 (82.1)	133 (84.2)	-2.1 (-15.4 – 11.2)
IDU including MSM and MSW**	6 (15.4)	11 (7.0)	8.4 (-3.6 – 20.4)
Other (blood trans, comp., tissue, rape, mom to child, etc)	1 (2.6)	14 (8.9)	-6.3 (-13.0 – 0.4)

*Indicates difference in proportion between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic participants with a 95% confidence interval.
**Indicates Men who have sex with women and inject drugs.

Table 1c. HIV/AIDS status at entry into SPNS: Comparison of Hispanic and non- Hispanics participants from all five sites.

HIV/AIDS Status at Entry into SPNS	Ethnicity		
	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic Descent	
	n (%)	n (%)	Diff (CI)*
HIV Status HIV not AIDS or AIDS Status Unknown	144 (62.6)	705 (72.7)	-10.1 (-17.0 – 3.2)
CDC-defined AIDS	86 (37.4)	265 (27.3)	10.1 (3.2 – 17.0)
Years DX Prior to SPNS Intake Intake within same year of DX	46 (20.0)	401 (41.3)	-21.3 (-27.3 – -15.3)
1 to 3 years	38 (16.5)	214 (22.1)	-5.6 (-11.1 – -0.1)
4 to 5 years	27(11.7)	98 (10.1)	1.6 (-3.0 – 6.2)
6 or more years	119 (51.7)	257 (26.5)	25.2 (18.2 – 32.2)

*Indicates difference in proportion between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic participants with a 95% confidence interval.

Table 2a. Socio-demographic information: Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants by site.

Socio-demographic characteristics	Site A		Site B		Site C		Site D		Site E	
	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender	N=63	N=63	N=57	N=296	N=34	N=311	N=44	N=50	N=32	N=250
Male	88.9	79.4	75.4	84.1	79.4	87.5	88.6	88.0	81.3	78.8
Female	11.1	20.6	24.6	15.9	20.6	12.5	11.4	12.0	18.8	21.2
Age (in years)	N=63	N=63	N=57	N=296	N=34	N=311	N=44	N=50	N=32	N=250
19 - 29	7.9	14.3	10.5	21.3	11.8	14.8	6.8	14.0	21.9	26.4
30 - 39	33.3	49.2	40.4	46.3	47.1	40.5	38.6	42.0	46.9	39.2
40 - 49	39.7	23.8	36.8	24.0	29.4	30.9	43.2	24.0	21.9	23.6
50 +	19.05	12.7	12.3	8.5	11.8	13.8	11.4	20.0	9.4	10.8
Marital Status	N=63	N=63	N=57	N=295	N=34	N=311	N=44	N=50	N=31	N=247
Single	58.7	55.6	45.6	57.0	41.2	61.1	52.3	50.0	64.5	50.2
Married/ live with someone	33.3	30.2	35.1	32.9	29.4	22.2	31.8	36.0	12.9	32.0
Separated/ Divorced/ Widowed/Other	7.9	14.3	19.3	10.2	29.4	16.7	15.9	14.0	22.6	17.8
Employment Status	N=63	N=63	N=57	N=296	N=34	N=311	N=44	N=50	N=32	N=250
Employed at some level	30.2	47.6	29.8	39.9	29.4	42.8	34.1	38.0	12.5	27.6
Unemployed but seeking	17.5	34.9	14.0	21.6	29.4	22.5	11.4	24.0	18.8	18.4
Not in Labor Force (including retired and disabled)	52.4	34.9	56.1	38.5	41.2	34.7	54.6	38.0	68.8	54.0

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Table 2b. Sexual orientation and mode of exposure: Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants by site.

Sexual Orientation and Mode of Exposure	Site A		Site B		Site C		Site D		Site E	
	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Sexual Orientation	N=62	N=62	N=54	N=292	N=34	N=305	N=43	N=47	N=32	N=250
Gay/Lesbian/ Bisexual	80.7	58.1	50.0	61.0	50.0	68.9	65.1	57.5	71.9	46.4
Heterosexual	19.4	41.9	50.0	39.0	50.0	31.2	34.9	42.6	28.1	53.6
Mode of Exposure	N=63	N=63	N=57	N=296	N=34	N=311	N=44	N=50	N=32	N=250
MSM	58.7	55.6	42.1	56.8	35.3	68.2	59.1	60.0	50.0	45.6
Heterosexual	15.9	34.9	38.6	29.4	32.4	19.6	18.2	26.0	15.6	42.4
IDU including MSM and MSW*	15.9	9.5	14.0	7.8	17.7	6.1	15.9	8.0	25.0	7.2
Other (blood trans, comp., tissue, rape, mom to child, etc)	9.5	0.0	5.3	6.1	14.7	6.1	6.8	6.0	9.4	4.8

*Men who have sex with women and inject drugs.

Table 2c. HIV Status at intake into SPNS: Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants by site.

HIV/AIDS Status at Entry into SPNS	Site A		Site B		Site C		Site D		Site E	
	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
HIV Status	N=63	N=63	N=57	N=296	N=34	N=311	N=44	N=50	N=32	N=250
HIV not AIDS or AIDS Status Unknown	58.7	60.3	71.9	65.5	64.7	75.2	43.2	60.0	78.1	83.6
CDC-defined AIDS	41.3	39.7	28.1	34.5	35.3	24.8	56.8	40.0	21.9	16.4
Years DX prior to SPNS Intake	N=63	N=63	N=57	N=296	N=34	N=311	N=44	N=50	N=32	N=250
Intake within same year of DX	9.5	28.6	19.3	46.3	20.6	24.4	13.6	18.0	50.0	64.4
1 to 3 years	14.3	20.6	15.8	23.6	17.6	24.1	18.2	28.0	18.8	16.8
4 to 5 years	6.3	15.9	15.8	8.4	14.7	13.8	13.6	14.0	9.4	5.2
6 or more years	69.8	34.9	49.1	21.6	47.1	37.6	54.5	40.0	21.9	13.6

CONCLUSIONS

Our exposure data appear to resemble the surveillance data from CDC on HIV/AIDS in Hispanic adults born in Mexico (CDC, 2003). Findings indicate that 68.8% of the Hispanic participants most likely contracted the infection through MSM contact, 30% heterosexual contact, 7% IDU, and 5% through other risk factors, as compared to 61%, 24%, 13%, and 2% reported by the CDC, respectively. Thirty-six percent of heterosexual study participants diagnosed within one year of intake were in the 30-39 year age group, which mirrors the national estimate of 35% for men and women (CDC, 2004a).

Between 2000 and 2003, it was estimated that 61.2% of men contracted HIV by MSM transmission in 32 States (CDC, 2004b), which is lower than the 67.2% (95% CI 64.2-70.1) found in our study. This suggests that among male PLWH/A receiving care along the border, a higher proportion of men are infected through MSM transmission than the CDC reported national proportion. Our population under care was 81% Hispanic which is slightly higher than the proportion of Hispanics (66%) residing in the 24 U.S. counties sharing a border with Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a).
Our study population of PLWH/A receiving care in one of five sites along the U.S.-Mexico border is representative of the overall general population living in that area of the U.S. In addition, the exposure risk factors of this population are quite similar to that found in the national Mexico-born Hispanic population. Culturally sensitive prevention and outreach targeted toward this region should take into consideration the differing transmission factors for men and women at various ages.