



BC Centre for Disease Control  
Provincial Health Services Authority

# Attitudes towards Anal Cancer and Screening among Men Who Have Sex with Men Living with HIV: Preliminary Results from the HPV-SAVE Study

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**Conflict of interest Disclosure: I have no conflicts of interest**

- Human papillomavirus (HPV)-associated anal cancer is a leading cause of non-HIV-related death in men who have sex with men (MSM) living with HIV
  - Anal cancer rates in MSM living with HIV are higher than cervical cancer rates prior to the adoption of universal screening
- Anal cancer rates in this population are up to 100-times higher than the general population, yet there are no universally accepted guidelines for screening
- Objective: to describe awareness and attitudes on anal cancer and anal cancer screening among MSM living with HIV

- The HPV Screening and Vaccine Evaluation (HPV-SAVE) study:
  - Examining screening and treatment of anal pre-cancerous lesions among MSM living with HIV
  - Recruitment sites: Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver
- Data Collection:
  - Anal Pap test in physician's offices; follow up with high-resolution anoscopy (HRA) depending on cytology results
  - Self-administered questionnaires
- Variables:
  - Awareness of anal cancer screening
  - Attitudes toward anal cancer screening
- Analysis:
  - Descriptive statistics

**Table 1: Participant Characteristics (n=318)**

Characteristic	Median	IQR
Age	48	37-57
Absolute CD4 count (/uL)	626	488-800
	Count	%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	216	68
Indigenous	8	3
Black	21	7
Asian	35	11
Other	35	11
Missing	3	1
<b>Education</b>		
Elementary/some high school	19	6
Completed high school	40	13
Some college/university	81	25
Completed college/university	121	38
Some or completed graduate education	54	17
Missing	3	1
<b>Employment</b>		
Student	11	3
Unemployed	31	10
Retired	53	17
Work full-time	161	51
Work part-time	28	9
Home duties	1	0
Other	29	9
Missing	4	1
	Count	%
<b>Abnormal Cytology</b>	169	55

Of 318 participants:

- 79% (n=250) were not aware of the availability of anal cancer screening
- 92% (n=292) reported that receiving anal cancer screening was important
- 75% (n=238) were moderately or very concerned about anal cancer
- 89% (n=284) were comfortable discussing anal health with their HIV doctor
- 92% (n=293) met with their HIV doctor at least every six months
- 60% (n=191) had never discussed anal cancer with any healthcare professional

- Anal cancer is a significant health concern to MSM living with HIV, yet many are unaware of screening options; despite this, nearly all those surveyed agree this is an important health issue.
- Almost 2/3 of participants have not discussed their anal health with a healthcare professional, despite the fact that they are well-connected to care and express concern about anal cancer risk.
- Findings suggest a pressing need to increase awareness and uptake of anal cancer screening opportunities for MSM living with HIV, and support a need to work towards evidence-based and sustainable anal cancer screening programs in those at highest risk.