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Session: **SS3**: Saturday May 2 – 15:00:17:00 – Health and Wellbeing

Track: Social Sciences
Subject: Gay, Bisexual and other Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)
Presentation Type: Oral
Title of Abstract: **Social support and STBBI transmission behaviours among HIV-negative gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBM)**

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Abstract

Background: Social support may have direct and indirect effects on behaviours associated with STI/HIV acquisition among GBM, including buffering against the effects of social stressors. We aimed to determine whether social support is associated with condomless anal sex (CAS) and whether social support has a moderating effect on the association between experiencing anti-gay harassment and CAS with PrEP use among HIV-negative GBM.

Methods: Sexually active HIV-negative GBM were recruited via respondent-driven sampling (RDS) in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver (n=1,753). Participants completed computer-assisted questionnaires in French or English. Social support and anti-gay harassment were measured using the Social Support Survey Instrument and the Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (HHRD). We examined the association of social support with CAS at last sexual encounter and HHRD score, controlling for age and accounting for clustering by RDS recruitment chain and city. We also examined the buffering effect of social support on the association between HHRD and CAS with PrEP use at last sexual encounter, using a moderation analysis.

Results: Median age of participants was 31 years, ~56% identified as White. Social support mean=3.82, SD=.89, range=1-5. HHRD mean=1.81, SD=.74, range=1-6. Regression analyses indicated that greater social support was associated with a lower likelihood of CAS (coefficient=-.09, p<.001) and lower HHRD scores (coefficient=-.16, p<.001). Higher HHRD scores were associated with lower likelihood of CAS with PrEP use (OR=0.20, p<.001) and this effect was attenuated by higher social support, controlling for age and city (HHRDxSocialSupport: OR=1.53, p<.001).

Conclusion: This analysis shows that higher levels of social support may be associated with less CAS among HIV-negative Canadian GBM and buffers against the effects of HHRD on HIV risk behaviour. Future research will explore the role of social support in HIV/STI prevention among GBM.