

## AN INCREASE IN OVERSEAS BORN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN AMONG HIV DIAGNOSES IN VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

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**Background:** In Victoria, more than 75% of all HIV notifications are among men who have sex with men (MSM), the majority Australian born. However, over the last 20 years the proportion of notifications among overseas born MSM has increased substantially and there is a need to better understand the epidemiology of HIV in this population.

**Methods:** HIV notification records from 1997-2016 were extracted from the Victorian Public Health Events Surveillance System. A descriptive analysis characterizing overseas born MSM was conducted. A two sample z-test assessed differences in characteristics between overseas-born and Australian-born MSM. Poisson regression was used to assess trends over time.

**Results:** Of the 3571 HIV notifications among MSM over the 20 year surveillance period, 23% were born overseas (n=831). This proportion increased steadily over the last 20 years, an 8% average increase per year, from 15% in 1997 to 46% in 2016 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Between 1997 and 2005 overseas born MSM diagnosed with HIV were most commonly from Europe (37%, including UK and Ireland), however between 2007 and 2016 the majority were from Asia (57%). Compared to Australian born MSM, more overseas born MSM reported overseas acquisition of HIV (6% vs. 18%,  $p < 0.005$ ), no previous HIV test (19% vs. 23%,  $p = 0.01$ ) and were diagnosed with a CD4 count  $< 350$  (26% vs. 34%,  $p < 0.005$ ). Nearly half of overseas-born MSM had been in Australia less than 5 years at the time of diagnosis (47%).

**Conclusions:** Reasons for the increase in overseas-born MSM in Victoria are not well understood but may relate to migration patterns or risk behaviour. The lack of previous testing history and late diagnosis as indicated by CD4 cell count at diagnosis, among overseas born MSM indicates a need to focus on HIV prevention, care and strategies to increase regular testing among this at-risk group of individuals.