

KISSING IS AN IMPORTANT RISK FACTOR FOR OROPHARYNGEAL GONORRHOEA IN MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN

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Introduction:

We hypothesised that oropharynx-to-oropharynx (i.e. tongue-kissing) is the main mode of gonorrhoea transmission among men who have sex with men (MSM). This is supported by mathematical modelling, but to date, no empirical study has investigated this. This study aimed to examine the association between kissing and oropharyngeal gonorrhoea.

Methods:

MSM attending a public sexual health centre in Melbourne, Australia, between March 2016 and February 2017 were invited to participate in a brief survey that collected their number of sexual partners in the last 3 months, in three distinct categories: kissing-only (i.e. no sex including no oral and/or anal sex), sex-only (i.e. any sex without kissing), and kissing-with-sex (i.e. kissing with any sex). Univariable and multivariable logistic regression analyses were performed to examine associations between oropharyngeal gonorrhoea positivity by nucleic acid amplification tests and the three distinct partner categories.

Results: 3,677 men completed the survey and were tested for oropharyngeal gonorrhoea. Their median age was 30 (IQR 25-37) and 6.2% ($n=229$) had oropharyngeal gonorrhoea. Men had a mean number of 4.3 kissing-only, 1.4 sex-only and 5.0 kissing-with-sex partners in the last 3 months. Kissing-only and kissing-with-sex were associated with oropharyngeal gonorrhoea, but sex-only was not. The adjusted odds for having oropharyngeal gonorrhoea were 1.4563-fold (95% CI 1.0312-2.0436) for men with ≥ 4 kissing-only partners and 1.8065-fold (95% CI 1.1603-2.7965) for men with ≥ 4 kissing-with-sex partners.

Conclusion:

These data indicate that kissing is a significant risk factor for oropharyngeal gonorrhoea in MSM, irrespective of whether sex also occurs. These data support the hypothesis that kissing plays a major role in the transmission of oropharyngeal gonorrhoea amongst MSM.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

EPFC, DAW and TRHR are supported by the Early Career Fellowships from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (1091226, 1123854 and 1091536 respectively) and NHMRC Program grant (568971). BPH is supported by an NHMRC Practitioner Fellowship (1105905). VJC is supported by a Research Training Scheme Scholarship from the Australian Government's Department of Education and Training. All other authors declare no competing interests.