

The potential impact of increased testing for HIV and syphilis among men who have sex with men in Jakarta, Indonesia

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Introduction

- Men who have sex with men (MSM) in Jakarta face high rates of HIV and syphilis, with prevalence exceeding 30% in 2022.
- HIV-syphilis co-infection increases transmission risk, underscoring the need for stronger prevention and control strategies.

Aims

- We used mathematical modelling to explore how increasing HIV/syphilis testing among MSM could reduce the incidence and prevalence of both infections.

Methods

- An individual-based model was developed to simulate overlapping HIV and syphilis epidemics among MSM in Jakarta.
- Partnership networks of 100 000 MSM were generated, with 56.8% had a regular partner, and 75.4% had casual partners in the past 12 months (1). HIV and syphilis were then introduced and transmitted through these networks.
- The baseline scenario assumed 35% of MSM undergo STI check-ups every 3 months, and 34% receive HIV/syphilis testing annually (1).
- The model assessed how increasing annual HIV/syphilis testing coverage affects incidence and prevalence of both infections.
- Co-infection dynamics were incorporated (2), with:
 - HIV transmission increases by 1–5 times when one or both partners have syphilis.
 - Syphilis transmission increases by 1.5–2.5 times when one or both partners have HIV.

Results

Raising testing coverage from 34% to 60% over five years results in:

- 13% reduction in new HIV cases (Median: 6.2 to 5.6 per 100 person-years) (Figure 1)
- 6% reduction in new syphilis infections (Median: 14.9 to 13.7 per 100 person-years) (Figure 1)
- 27% reduction in AIDS prevalence at Year 5 (Median: 0.2% to 0.1%) (Figure 2)
- 25% reduction in tertiary syphilis prevalence at Year 5 (Median: 0.7% to 0.4%) (Figure 2)
- Most reductions occur within the first two years of increased coverage.

Increasing testing coverage to 90% more than doubles the reductions, with improvements ranging from 2.1× to 3.0×.

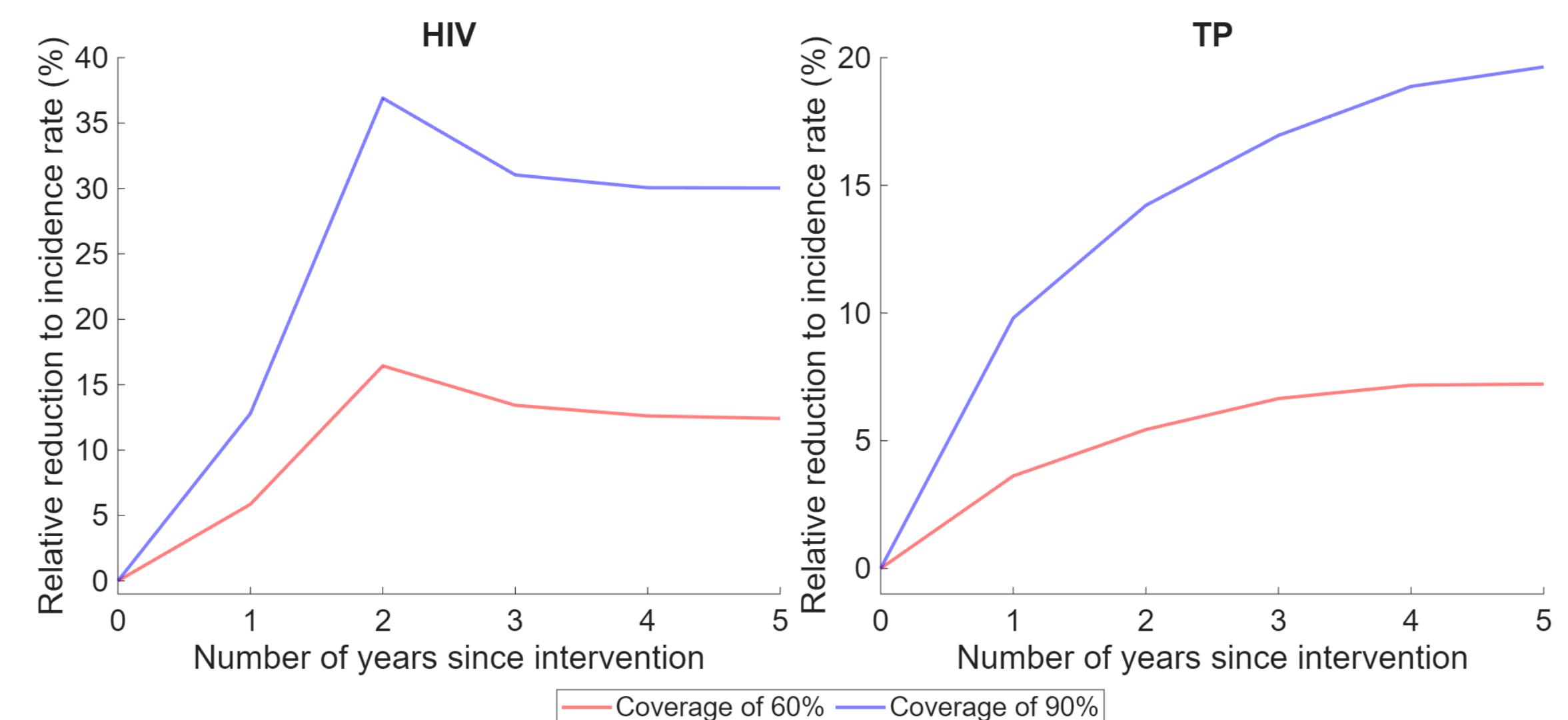


Figure 1: Reduction in HIV and syphilis incidence rates under increased testing coverage scenarios (60% and 90%), relative to the baseline scenario where testing coverage remains at 34%.

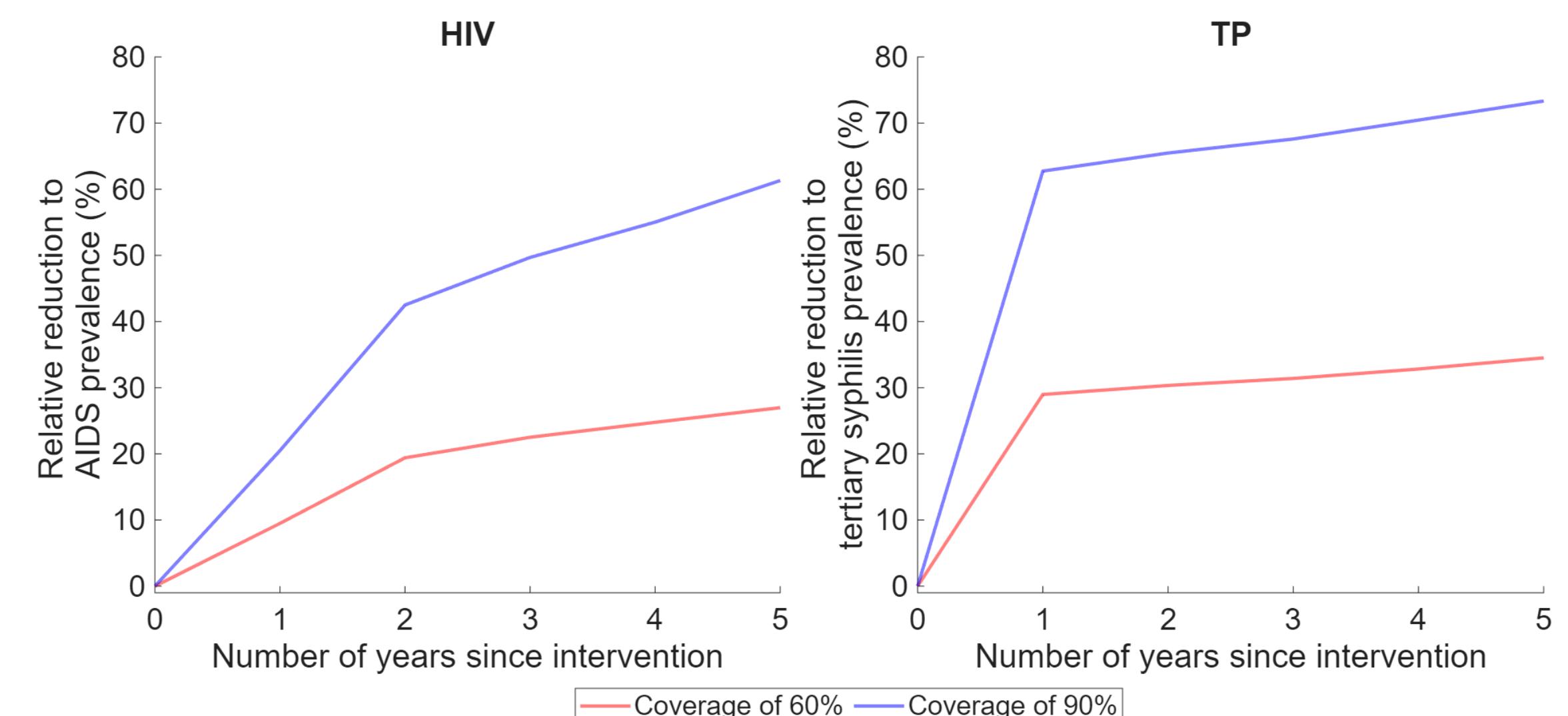


Figure 2: Reduction in AIDS and tertiary syphilis prevalence under increased testing coverage scenarios (60% and 90%), relative to the baseline scenario where testing coverage remains at 34%.

References: 1. Morineau et al. AIDS Behav. 2011;15(5):1033-44, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10461-009-9590-6>. 2. Wilson et al. Phase A of the National Gay Men's Syphilis Action Plan: modelling evidence and research on acceptability of interventions for controlling syphilis in Australia. Sydney: National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research; 2009.

Conclusion

- Increasing annual HIV/syphilis testing coverage among MSM in Jakarta can significantly reduce incidence and prevalence.
- HIV reductions are most rapid in the first two years.
- Syphilis reductions may continue beyond five years.
- Further research is needed to assess the feasibility of expanding testing to other STIs, such as gonorrhoea and chlamydia.

This study was supported through a grant from amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research with support from the National Institute of Health's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Cancer Institute, National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, and the Fogarty International Center, as part of the International Epidemiology Databases to Evaluate AIDS (IeDEA; U01AI069907). The Kirby Institute is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and is affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales. The content and views expressed are those of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of any of the governments or institutions mentioned above.

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