



PROJET PLASMA

UQÀM

Are gender-neutral admissibility questions the way to go? Acceptability of two qualification scenarios for plasma donations intended for fractionation that include gbMSM

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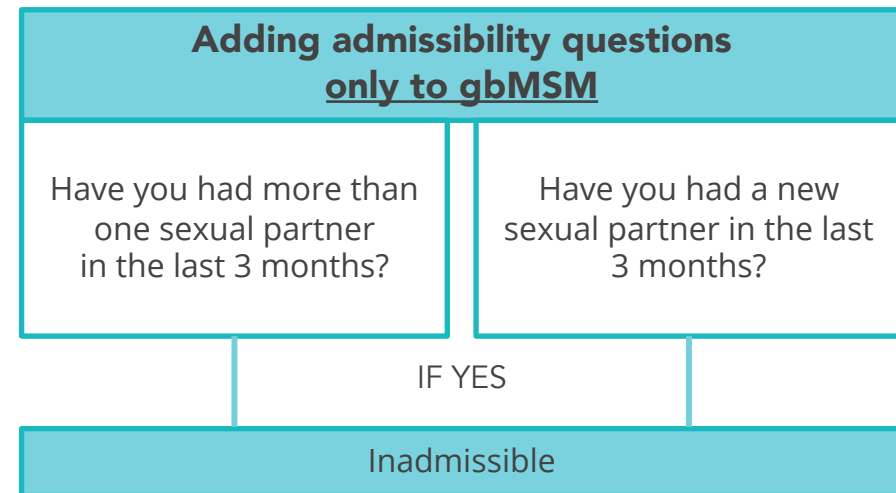
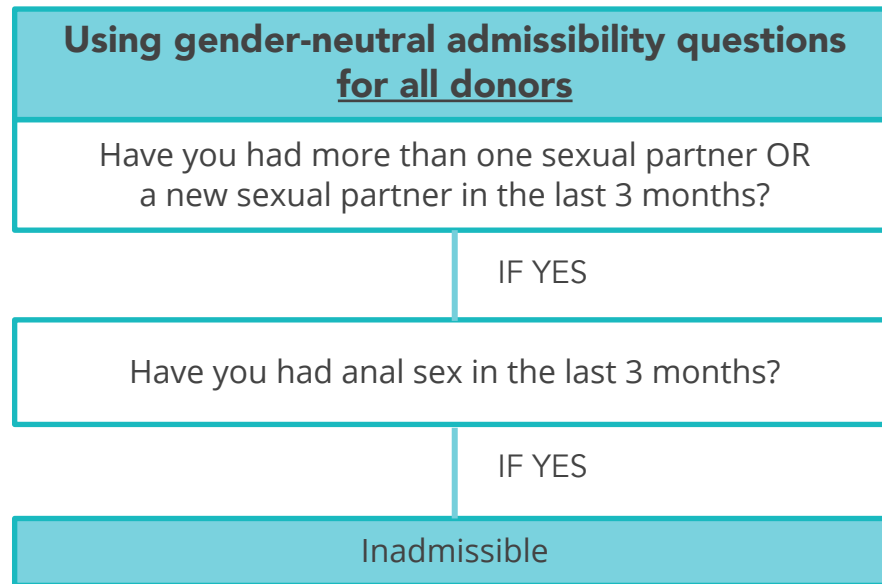
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BACKGROUND

Plasma donation intended for fractionation has been deemed a prudent initial step to allow gbMSM to donate blood while maintaining product safety.

The project aims to document the acceptability and feasibility of plasma donations intended for fractionation for gbMSM in Québec, Canada.

The acceptability of two [approaches to admissibility](#) was assessed:



METHODS AND PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION

1

Recruitment through social media was deployed between July and September 2021

2

Participants were assigned to a condition, where one of the two qualification scenarios was presented to them (single blind)

3

Participants had to complete a short online questionnaire and watch a video explaining plasma donation

4

One-on-one 60 minutes virtual interviews were conducted with 28 gbMSM

Participants

- ❖ Were aged **between 21 and 62**, with a mean age of 33 years old
- ❖ 61% were **born in Québec**
- ❖ 89% identified as **white**
- ❖ 89% had a **university degree**
- ❖ 86% identified as **gay**
- ❖ 86% identified as **male**
- ❖ 39% had **already donated blood**

RESULTS



Using gender-neutral admissibility questions for all donors (N=15)

- ❖ Considered less discriminatory and more inclusive and equitable, since it assesses at-risk behaviour rather than belonging to a group of people
- ❖ Shows an openness towards gbMSM
- ❖ Would allow a proportion of gbMSM to donate
- ❖ Questioning anal sex behaviours feels like an indirect way of targeting gbMSM and a vector of discrimination
- ❖ Associating anal sex and blood contamination feeds prejudices against gbMSM
- ❖ Raises interrogations on the definition of anal sex: does it include the use of sex toys? Fisting? Condoms?
- ❖ Would exclude all gbMSM that are in non-monogamous relationship configurations and have anal sex

Acceptability: 6,40/10

Adding admissibility questions only to gbMSM (N=13)

- ❖ Represents a small step forward allowing some gbMSM to donate
- ❖ Generates a source of discrimination, prejudice, and stigma towards gbMSM, since others are not held accountable for these behaviours
- ❖ Donations feel partially opened to gbMSM, relieving blood donation agencies from external pressure
- ❖ Raises interrogations regarding the usefulness of these questions, since all donations are tested
- ❖ Would exclude all gbMSM that are in non-monogamous relationship configurations, even if they do not take risks
- ❖ Would exclude trans and non-binary individuals, since the questions are formulated for men

Acceptability: 5,46/10



CONCLUSION

- ❖ Despite being more acceptable, gender-neutral admissibility questions can be perceived as prejudicial depending on:
 - The behaviours that are assessed
 - The efforts that are deployed in explaining such a change
- ❖ Participants felt the need to better understand the choices made by Héma-Québec (blood donation agency in Québec) in order to ultimately reduce their impression of being the target of discrimination
- ❖ The acceptability of the gender-neutral admissibility questions remains tinged with a feeling of distrust towards blood donation agencies, a feeling which has most likely been fuelled by years of tumultuous relationship between these organizations and the LGBTQ+ communities
- ❖ Blood donation agencies that would like to implement gender-neutral admissibility questions should:
 - Explain the scientific reasoning behind the new qualification criteria
 - Offer clear and complete definitions of the concepts chosen that suit the realities of LGBTQ+ communities
 - Involve LGBTQ+ communities in their efforts to change gbMSM admissibility and work towards a reconciliation process

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