

Socio-demographic inequalities in HIV testing and prevalence among older adults in rural Tanzania, 2013

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Background

- HIV research in many parts of the world, including Tanzania, focuses on adults 15-49 years; ignoring persons aged 50 years and above.
- Limited studies reported high HIV prevalence among older people.
- Worldwide, an estimated 3.6 million people aged 50 years and older were living with HIV in 2012
- 2007 DHS in SA, reported the prevalence of HIV among older adults was 4.0%, compared with 5.0% among those aged 15–49 years



Objective of study

This study aimed to estimate social demographic inequalities in HIV testing and prevalence among older adults aged 50+ years, living in Ifakara town, Tanzania, in 2013.



Methodology

- This is a cross-sectional study using baseline data from Ifakara MZIMA cohort study (2012/13).
- Consenting participants were interviewed and tested for HIV.
- The questionnaire contained information on prior testing behaviour, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, occupation, gender, ethnicity, religion, education (PROGRESS framework indicators).
- Multivariable logistic regression analysis was used.



Results: HIV testing rate

- 1,708 adults 50+ years included in the study
- HIV testing rate (ever tested) was 11.4%.
- Multivariable analysis showed that the HIV testing rate:
 - Decreased with increasing age (OR=0.19 (95%CI 0.09-0.41 for 75+ versus 50-54);
 - Those separated/divorced/widowed had higher odds of testing than those married (OR=1.46; 1.02-2.10);
 - "other Christians" had a higher odds than Muslims (OR=1.95; 1.06-3.58).



Results: HIV prevalence

- HIV prevalence was 6%
- Multivariable analysis showed that the HIV prevalence:
 - Is decreasing with age increasing (OR=0.27; 0.11-0.66 for 75+ versus 50-54)
 - Catholics have a lower odds compared to Muslims (OR=0.54; 0.34-0.85).



Discussion: HIV testing rate

- The testing rate of older adults (11.4%) was low when compared to those 15-49 years in the Mzima cohort (22.9%)
- Same results as in the 2012 RSA survey
- The low testing rate could be attributed to the fact that many prevention strategies to combat HIV infection are concentrated on the younger age groups
- That means we expect unnecessary mortality because they don't link to care and treatment



Discussion: HIV prevalence

- The HIV prevalence among those 50+ in the Mzima cohort (6%) was quite similar to the HIV prevalence among those 15-49 yrs
- Some studies already found a higher prevalence among older adults.
- Prevalence is increasing among older adults due to:
 - Survival on ART
 - High risk sexual behaviour of older adults
 - The fact that older people are commonly not targeted hence not reached with prevention interventions



Limitations

- There is limited research done on this topic so comparison is difficult.
- This study was done at only in two - semi urban- villages and might therefore not be representative for the whole country.



Way forward

- These findings emphasize the urgent need for the government, policy makers, HIV programmers, decision makers, researchers and the donor community to include the older adults in their policies, plans, strategies and research.
- The social demographic inequalities observed in this study should be addressed clearly by the HIV implementers so as the older adults are included in HIV response (Prevention, treatment and care).
- The findings of this study warrant further research on the HIV prevalence and testing behaviour of older adults, including studies on the sexual behaviour of

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Thanks for listening



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