Enhancing diagnostic data for HIV surveillance: The Laboratory Enhancement Study

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Introduction

• Serodiagnostic data useful for HIV surveillance

• Less sensitive ("detected") or STAHIS assay of HIV-positive specimens identifies persons who were recently-infected (e.g.< 4 months)

• Can also calculate HIV incidence density, a critical indicator usually difficult to measure

Study objectives

• To estimate HIV incidence density among persons undergoing HIV testing according to exposure category and region of test

• To monitor trends in HIV incidence density among specific populations particularly affected by the HIV epidemic

Data collection and management

• Questionnaire sent with all new HIV diagnoses and 1:200 sample of HIV-negative results

• Data collected on risk factors for HIV infection and HIV test history

• Questionnaire returned by mail, fax or telephone interview

• Data entered in Microsoft Access

Laboratory methods

• EIA assay modified as follows:

  • Serum diluted to 1: 20,000

  • Incubation period reduced to 30 minutes

  • Cut-off value increased

  • Abbott 3A15 EIA kit from until October 2000

• From October 2000, used Vironostika assay (Bio-Merieux) allowing for different "window period" at different cut-off (70-336 days)

Data analysis, basic

• Calculated questionnaire completion rate using Kaplan-Meier survival analysis

• Modeled exposure category distribution assuming proportions of cases without data some those without data on lab requisition but with data from questionnaire

• Calculated incidence density initially using formula from original publication on STAHIS (Janssen et al, JAMA 1998)

Data analysis, adjustment

• Developed analytic approach to adjust crude estimates using formula which incorporates positive testing bias (Remis et al, 14th ICA 2002)

• Calculated incidence at five values of "window period" and fit to modeled incidence density using formula incorporating \( f_{\text{meas}} \) (proportion testing "prematurely") and \( f_{\text{true}} \) (true incidence density).

• Developed software with goodness-of-fit to identify values of \( f_{\text{meas}} \) and \( f_{\text{true}} \) which minimised sum of the squares of "residuals" observed versus expected

Study questionnaires mailed and returned, Oct 1999-Dec 2003

Exposure category classification according to HIV test requisition, returned questionnaires and modeled distribution, HIV-positives

HIV incidence (per 100 person-years) for selected exposure categories by health region

MSM: HIV incidence by six-month period and region, 1999-2003

IDU: HIV incidence by six-month period and region, 1999-2003

High risk heterosexual: HIV incidence by six-month period and region, 1999-2003

Low risk heterosexual: HIV incidence by six-month period and region, 1999-2003

Summary of findings - Trends in HIV incidence

• Toronto: no evidence of increasing HIV incidence despite syphilis outbreak

• Ottawa: increased incidence

• Elsewhere: stable at lower level

IDU:

• Ottawa: incidence highest in Ontario

• Elsewhere: sustained low rate is reassuring

Conclusions

• HIV serodiagnostic program extremely useful for HIV surveillance

• Due to important problems in missing and unrepresentative data on risk factors and HIV test history, standard laboratory data must be enhanced on an ongoing basis

• Despite limitations, seroconversion assay provides critical information on HIV incidence

• Calculated incidence density can be adjusted to eliminate testing bias

• Adjustment yields values as low as 50% of crude values

• Bias appears to vary across exposure category, region and over time

• Adjusted values more useful for evaluation and modeling

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