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MONITORING PREVALENCE OF HIV INFECTION AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PATTERNS THROUGH LABORATORY DATA

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OBJECTIVES: 1.- To estimate the prevalence of HIV infection among people who request the test in Catalonia. 2.- To describe the demographic and behavioral characteristics of this population.

METHODS: All laboratories performing HIV test within the Public Health System are used. The total number of test and their results are collected in a monthly basis. To monitor trends four periods of 15 days have been defined within a year. A standardized questionnaire on sociodemographic and behavioral data is used by the physicians to collect information from all patients in which a HIV test has been performed in one of the defined period.

RESULTS: 652 (20.1%) out of 3245 performed tests from 17 hospitals during one month period were ELISA positive. Preliminary data from one of the participant centers show the following transmission category distribution of infected patients: 64.5% were intravenous drug users, 21% homosexual/bisexual men, 11.3% reported heterosexual contact as the only possible risk factor and 3.2% were children from parents at risk.

CONCLUSIONS: Although demands for HIV test are influenced by multiple variables and they do not allow for extrapolation of prevalence figures, systematic and homogeneous collection of these data can be an important tool in evaluating the use of laboratory facilities and in the planning of health resources. In conjunction with surveillance of other sentinel populations, it can also result in a better understanding of the distribution and trends of HIV infection in a given population.

Keywords: Bisexuality, Child, HIV Infections, Homosexuality, Humans, Laboratories, Male, Prevalence, Questionnaires, Risk Factors, Substance Abuse, Intravenous, epidemiology

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