
AIDS IN THE CONTEXT OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

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SUMMARY

The predominant mode of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) transmission throughout the world is sexual. The sexual contact with an infected person is estimated to account for nearly 90% of HIV infected cases worldwide. The risk of HIV transmission, practicing unprotected sexual contact with an infected person, depends on several factors: the mode of sexual intercourse, state of the disease in infected partner, virulence of the virus, age and gender of an uninfected partner and coexistence of other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). There exists also an apparent influence of HIV infection and immunosuppression on the transmission, clinical manifestation, or natural history of other STDs. Awareness of HIV/STD risk is important in all contexts of sexuality, underlying the strategies of prevention and public health intervention. Safer sex messages which include reducing the number of sexual partners, avoiding unprotected sexual practices and using condoms are of extreme importance.

KEY WORDS

HIV infection, AIDS, sexual transmission, cofactors, sexually transmitted diseases

INTRODUCTION

HIV infection is spreading dramatically around the globe, is increasingly spread by heterosexual behaviours and is ultimately lethal. Current treatment of HIV infection is only of modest benefit, and intense efforts to create an HIV vaccine have been thwarted to date by the antigenic variability of the virus (1).

The modes of transmission of HIV have not expanded significantly beyond those described or predicted early in the epidemic: sexual contact, parenteral transmission, or perinatal transmission from an infected mother (2). In a global sense, the predominant mode of HIV transmission throughout

the world is sexual and accounts for nearly 90% of HIV infected cases (3). Heterosexual and bisexual transmission is more common in developing countries, and homosexual transmission is more common in industrialized countries, where in the foreseeable future heterosexual transmission represents a serious threat to so called second generation of infected (4). Heterosexual contact accounts for about 75% of worldwide infected (5).

HIV IN GENITAL TRACT SECRETIONS

HIV can be detected by several methods in genital tract secretions both as free and intracellular virus.

