Symptomatic primary HIV infection or risk experiences? Circumstances surrounding HIV testing and diagnosis among recent seroconverters.

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Abstract: Our objective was to understand the circumstances surrounding HIV testing among recent HIV seroconverters (n=80) compared to HIV-negative controls (n=106) in Ontario, Canada using self-reported interview data. Diagnosis of symptomatic primary HIV infection (SPHI) was defined as diagnosis by the participant's physician. Testing in response to symptoms was reported by 42% of seroconverters vs 12% of controls. More controls than seroconverters tested in response to risk behaviour (70% vs 50%) or from a desire to know their status (34% vs 12%). Among seroconverters, 76% reported 'flu-like' illness during the time period of infection, 66% had symptoms consistent with SPHI, and 35% reported a physician's diagnosis of SPHI. Compared to seroconverters with undiagnosed SPHI, more of those diagnosed with SPHI had rash (odds ratio=4.5). SPHI plays a significant role in HIV testing and subsequent early diagnosis in this population. More seroconversions could be diagnosed with better patient and physician awareness of its symptoms.

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