

High prevalence of asymptomatic Sexually Transmitted Infections in men patients living with HIV

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INTRODUCTION

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) occur frequently in men who have sex with men (MSM) living with HIV. Guidelines recommendations do not include screening for asymptomatic people. The aim of the study was to identify the prevalence of asymptomatic STIs in men patients living with HIV (PLHIV).

METHODS

A cross-sectional study was conducted in people with HIV infection at the Hospital de Infectología “La Raza” National Medical Center, from May to August 2022. An urethral sample was taken from PLHIV who were attended in the HIV clinic for men. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before the sample was taken for the identification of 11 microorganisms.

Detection was performed by PCR test for *Chlamydia trachomatis*, *Neisseria gonorrhoea*, *Haemophilus ducreyi*, *Mycoplasma genitalium*, *Mycoplasma hominis*, *Treponema pallidum*, *Trichomonas vaginalis*, *Ureaplasma urealyticum*, *Ureaplasma parvum*, *Herpes Simplex virus type 1* and 2.

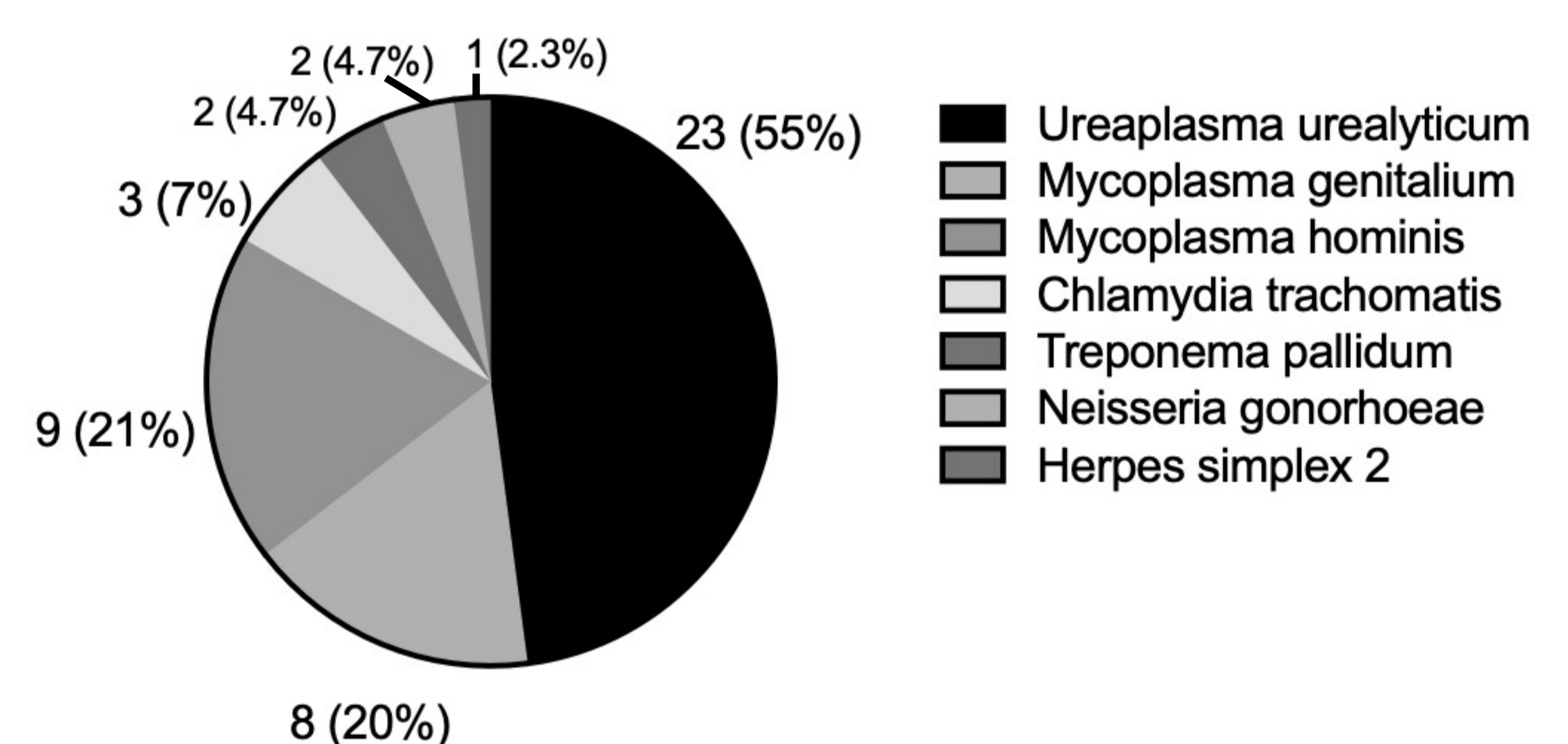
Participants were also asked to complete a questionnaire documenting behavioral characteristics or symptoms related to a possible STI infection (Braun STI screening ZPHI study). The data were measured in medians with interquartile ranges and the prevalence of detection of urethral microorganisms was presented as a percentage

RESULTS

We included 184 male naive treatment patients who started an antiretroviral regimen. Baseline characteristics were a median age of 26 years (IQR 22-31), CD4+ 274 cells count (IQR 183-380), and HIV-1 RNA viral load 4.36 log₁₀ (IQR 3.74 -4.83).

We detected at least one microorganism in 42 (22.8%) urethral samples; of these, *Ureaplasma urealyticum* was detected in 23 (55%), and *Mycoplasma genitalium* in 8 (20%), *Mycoplasma hominis* in 9 (21%), *Chlamydia trachomatis* in 3 (7.1%), *Treponema pallidum* 2 (4.7%), *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in 2 (4.7%) and herpes simplex 2 in 1 (2.3%). In 5 (12%) patients, more than one microorganism was detected.

Microorganism detected in urethral sample



CONCLUSION

In PLHIV naive treatment and asymptomatic, urethral colonization with Mollicutes was high. The most frequently found microorganisms were *Ureaplasma urealyticum* and *Mycoplasma genitalium*. The primary reason that gonorrhoea and chlamydial infections are untreated is that infected people never have symptoms. Regular screening should be considered in PLHIV at least each 6 to 12 months