Abstract

Sexual risk behaviour and intravenous drug use are common among drug users. This study was conducted during the implementation of a pilot project of Voluntary HIV Counselling and Testing for drug users in Portugal. Objectives: To characterize the patterns of drug abuse in drug users, risk behaviours and serological status to the HIV virus. Methodology: Two questionnaires (QADR and QVC), adapted from the Behaviour Surveillance Survey were applied to drug abusers, following the execution of a HIV quick test. Data were analysed with SPSS 15. The statistic tests Pearson’s Chi-square and Fisher’s exact test were performed for categorical variables and the Student’s t-test was used for quantitative variables. The significance level adopted was a=0.05 and all the tests were two-tailed. Results: 186 patients responded to the QADR. Mean age was 33.9 years (SD=6.8). 55% of the patients admitted drug use 30 days prior to the interview. 59.7% of the patients admitted IV drug use and 27.9% of those admitted present IV drug use. 75% of the IV drug use sample shared needles and paraphernalia. 74.7% have been tested for HIV before. Most of the HIV-1 negative patients performed the last test less than 2 years ago. 25 patients responded to the QVC. Mean age was 32.12 years (SD=6.9). All patients were HIV negative. 64% admitted present drug use and 25% present IV drug use. 75% of the patients that admitted IV drug use shared needles or paraphernalia. Condom use was irregular. 84% of the patients had been tested for HIV (average 3.57 tests per patient, SD=4.9). Individuals that were enrolled in a substance abuse treatment program had less present IV drug use as presented less risk behaviours. Present drug abuse was related to present IV drug use. Knowledge about HIV/AIDS was proper and no difficulties finding sterilized material or condoms was admitted.