Abstract

Background: High rates of sexual risk behaviours are being reported among HIV-positive MSM which raises the question about the ideas of sexual responsibility that exist in this population to prevent the transmission and/or reinfection of HIV and other STIs. This study sought to understand the discourses on sexual care and responsibility in men living with HIV who have sex with men.

Methods: A qualitative study was carried out with 78 men (aged 27-65): 35 individual interviews and 43 in five discussion groups, in the cities of Barcelona, Madrid and Palma de Mallorca, between 2007 and 2008. The selection criterion was that eighteen months had passed after a HIV diagnosis was established. The grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data.

Results: Three distinct discourses about sexual responsibility were observed: (1) sole responsibility: it is the HIV-positive man who should protect himself in order to protect others. This discourse is based on an ethical position (altruistic), in which the duty and obligation to protect others is a priority; (2) shared responsibility: both parties agree and/or consent to high risk sexual practices although those who tend to use this discourse, in practice, ultimately assume full responsibility, and (3) individual responsibility: each person is responsible for himself, although the type of emotional bond with others may affect the decision to protect only oneself (there is some commitment to protect a sexual partner when some- thing is felt for that person).

Conclusions: The sexual care behaviour among HIV-positive MSM was determined by three discourses. Those discourses were influenced by various factors: moral conscience, sexual context, type of sexual partner and disclosure of HIV status.

Keywords

Sexual behaviour, Responsibility, Gays, HIV, Secondary prevention, Qualitative research.