

HIV infections double in older population in 10 years

Washington, February 04: Experts are encouraging sexually active adults aged 45 and over to indulge in safe sex after recent figures revealed that sexually transmitted infections in 50-90 year olds have doubled in the past ten years.

Rachel von Simson, medical student at King's College London and Ranjababu Kulasegaram, consultant genitourinary physician at St Thomas' Hospital London, revealed that 80 percent of 50-90 years olds are sexually active.

Statistics show an increase in cases of syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhoea in the UK, USA and Canada in 45-64 year olds.

There has also been an increase in cases of HIV with those aged 50 and over accounting for 20 percent of adults accessing HIV care, an 82 percent increase on figures from 2001.

This may however, be down to HIV patients living longer, but new diagnoses of HIV in the over 50s have doubled between 2000 and 2009.

There has been little research on the reason behind the increase but it is thought that due to physical changes, older, post-menopausal women are more vulnerable to STIs.

Furthermore, men on erectile dysfunction drugs are significantly more likely to be diagnosed with an STI within the first year of usage and in the year before starting the drug.

The researchers suggest that GPs should take the opportunity to discuss safe sex with men seeking erectile dysfunction drugs as they have a high risk of contracting an STI.

The authors report that the UK is currently lacking in STI research in older adults and more needs to be done, but concluded that 'doctors should maintain a low threshold for investigating sexually transmitted infections in older adults' and should encourage discussions regardless of the patient's age.

The study has been published in the Student BMJ, Rachel von Simson.

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