An outbreak of penicillin-sensitive strain of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in Sydney men

The recent article by Rowbottom et al concern the outbreak of a penicillin sensitive strain of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* prompts us to report the recent emergence of a new strain of infection in the gay men attending the genitourinary medicine clinic in Edinburgh, Scotland.

In 1993 we were aware of an increase in the number of infections with serovar 1A-6 in gay men. Over the 4 year period 1990 to 1993 with a decrease in the proportion of isolates with an MIC of <0.5 mg/l from 93% (14/15) to 12% (1/8) (p <0.01). Although such resistance may be an advantage where antibiotic pressure is high there is generally a poor correlation between the level of resistance to antibiotics and prevalence of a serovar possibly as a result of an associated impaired uptake of nutrients. Alternatively the sharp increase in 1A-6 infections in gay men may be a result of its chance introduction into a “high frequency transmitter” group of promiscuous individuals which might result in a brief and self limiting micro epidemic. One possible source for this strain is the Far East where 1A-6 infections are common.10 The isolation of all seven homosexual isolates in the first six months of 1993 would support this hypo-

thesis. Interestingly although all seven homosexually acquired infections were acquired locally, the one heterosexual infection in 1993 was acquired in the Far East raising the possibility that this individual was actually bisexual.

Thus, although uncommon, 1A serovar-group infections can be associated with both an outbreak of homosexually acquired infection and with reduced penicillin sensitivity.

JONATHAN D ROSS HUGH YOUNG Department of GUM Medicine and Scottish Genitalia Reference Laboratory, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, Lauriston Place, Edinburgh EH3 9YW, UK


2. Young H, Moyes A, Ross JDC, McMillan A. Patterns of homosexually acquired gono-


8. Bygdeman S. Polyclonal and monoclonal antibody response to immunogenicity of go-
Genital herpes simplex virus type 1 in women

Wilson et al. reported an apparent increase in the prevalence of herpes simplex virus type 1 genital herpes among women. Lancet 1994;343:1459-62.

Incidence of herpes genital infection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herpes simplex virus type 1</td>
<td>25 (67.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herpes simplex virus type 2</td>
<td>12 (32.4%)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
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Ninety patients who had presented to the genitourinary medicine clinics at Durham and Bishop Auckland between April 1992 and April 1994 were identified using KC 60 data code Cl0a (herpes simplex first attack). All were heterosexual and the group comprised 28 men and 62 women. All had genital swabs taken for viral culture, and these were all sent to the PHLS at Newcastle, where they were diagnosed using monoclonal antibodies conjugated to FITC. A result was documented in 89 case notes, of which 40 (44.9%) were negative.

The major positive cultures were HSV 1 (see table).

Participation in orogenital sex was documented in 42 cases (although there was no differentiation between active or passive involvement). In the group with HSV all 23/32 (71.9%) had participated in oral sex, compared with the HSV 2 group in which 6/12 (50%) gave this history (p = 0.296).

Details concerning orogenital contact were only present in 80 sets of notes. Presence or absence of cold sores in patient or partner, or a previous history of them, was poorly documented, being recorded in less than 50% of case notes.

Evidence from Edinburgh and London suggests that herpes simplex virus type 1 does appear to have been increasing in incidence, although previously with a continuing predominance of HSV 2 in genital lesions. This may be related to orogenital contact—recent figures from the nationwide survey of sexual attitudes and lifestyles in the U.K. show that 75-2% of men and 69-2% of women have participated in oral sex at some time, with 55-6% of men or 49-5% of women reporting this practice in the last year.

This study only looked at cases of primary genital herpes, whereas the HSV 1 group all appear to have studied viral swabs taken from patients with primary or recurrent disease. If the incidence of HSV 1 is currently rising, it might be expected that the proportion of HSV 1 amongst cases of primary genital herpes may be increasing more noticeably.

Another clinic in the same region as our own has also reported a higher incidence of HSV 1 in women (in press).
The value of primary colposcopy in genitourinary medicine.

M Griffiths

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