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## Research Article

# HIV SEROCONVERSION IN SERODISCORDANT COUPLES: INSIGHTS FROM A MALAYSIAN CONTEXT SEROCONVERSION

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## ABSTRACT

Serodiscordant couples, where one partner is HIV-positive and the other is HIV-negative, face unique challenges and risks in terms of HIV transmission and seroconversion. This study aims to provide insights into HIV seroconversion in serodiscordant couples within the context of Malaysia. A retrospective analysis was conducted, utilizing data from medical records and interviews with serodiscordant couples attending HIV clinics in Malaysia. The study examines the factors associated with HIV seroconversion, including sexual behaviors, adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART), and access to preventive measures. The findings shed light on the challenges faced by serodiscordant couples in Malaysia and provide valuable information for the development of targeted interventions and support services.

## KEYWORDS

HIV, seroconversion, serodiscordant couples, Malaysia, sexual behaviors, antiretroviral therapy (ART), preventive measures, interventions, support services.

## INTRODUCTION

Serodiscordant couples, where one partner is HIV-positive and the other is HIV-negative, are at risk of HIV transmission and seroconversion. Understanding the factors contributing to HIV seroconversion in serodiscordant couples is crucial for developing effective interventions and support services. This study aims to provide insights into HIV seroconversion in

serodiscordant couples within the context of Malaysia. By exploring the factors associated with seroconversion, including sexual behaviors, adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART), and access to preventive measures, this study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge base and inform targeted

strategies to reduce HIV transmission in this population.

Serodiscordant couples, where one partner is HIV-positive and the other is HIV-negative, face unique challenges and risks in terms of HIV transmission and seroconversion. Understanding the factors contributing to HIV seroconversion in this population is essential for developing effective interventions and support services. This study aims to provide insights into HIV seroconversion in serodiscordant couples within the context of Malaysia, shedding light on the specific challenges and experiences faced by couples in this diverse and multicultural country.

Malaysia has a concentrated HIV epidemic, with sexual transmission being the primary mode of transmission. Within this context, serodiscordant couples are at heightened risk of HIV transmission, and the consequences of seroconversion can have significant implications for both individuals and their relationships. Despite the importance of understanding the factors influencing seroconversion, there is limited research conducted specifically within the Malaysian context.

By exploring the factors associated with HIV seroconversion in serodiscordant couples in Malaysia, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the local dynamics of HIV transmission within this population. The study will examine sexual behaviors, adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART), and access to preventive measures as key areas of investigation. The findings will contribute to the existing knowledge base on serodiscordant couples and inform the development of targeted interventions and support services tailored to the Malaysian context.

Understanding the specific challenges faced by serodiscordant couples in Malaysia is crucial for

developing effective strategies to reduce HIV transmission risks. By identifying the factors that contribute to seroconversion within this population, policymakers, healthcare providers, and community organizations can work together to implement interventions that address the unique cultural, social, and healthcare needs of serodiscordant couples. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the overall goal of reducing HIV transmission rates and improving the well-being of serodiscordant couples in Malaysia.

## METHOD

A retrospective analysis was conducted using data obtained from medical records and interviews with serodiscordant couples attending HIV clinics in Malaysia. The study included couples who had been in a serodiscordant relationship for a significant period of time and had documented instances of seroconversion. Medical records were reviewed to gather information on the timing of seroconversion, previous HIV testing history, ART initiation, and treatment adherence. In-depth interviews were conducted with the serodiscordant couples to gather insights into their sexual behaviors, condom use, and access to preventive measures such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

Data collected from medical records and interviews were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Descriptive statistics were employed to examine the demographic characteristics of the participants, including age, gender, and duration of the serodiscordant relationship. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and patterns related to sexual behaviors, adherence to ART, and access to preventive measures. The findings from the analysis were then interpreted and discussed in the context of the Malaysian setting, taking into account the sociocultural factors and healthcare infrastructure.

Ethical considerations were ensured throughout the study, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained during data collection and analysis.

By employing this methodology, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to HIV seroconversion in serodiscordant couples in Malaysia. The findings will inform the development of targeted interventions and support services to reduce HIV transmission and improve the well-being of serodiscordant couples in the country.

## RESULTS

The retrospective analysis and interviews with serodiscordant couples in Malaysia yielded several important findings regarding HIV seroconversion:

### **Sexual Behaviors:**

Unprotected sexual intercourse was identified as a significant factor contributing to HIV seroconversion in serodiscordant couples. Inconsistent condom use and engaging in high-risk sexual behaviors, such as multiple sexual partners, were prevalent among the couples studied.

### **Adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):**

Suboptimal adherence to ART was observed in some HIV-positive partners, leading to increased viral load and higher transmission risk. Factors influencing adherence included medication side effects, forgetfulness, and lack of support or counseling.

### **Access to Preventive Measures:**

Limited access to preventive measures, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), was evident among serodiscordant couples in Malaysia. The availability and affordability of PrEP were identified as key barriers,

preventing couples from accessing this effective preventive intervention.

## DISCUSSION

The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and support services to address the challenges faced by serodiscordant couples in Malaysia. Enhancing awareness and education on safer sexual practices, including consistent condom use, is crucial for reducing transmission risks. Efforts should be made to improve ART adherence among HIV-positive partners through counseling, peer support, and addressing barriers to medication adherence.

Access to preventive measures, such as PrEP, should be expanded to ensure that serodiscordant couples have effective tools to protect against HIV transmission. This requires addressing affordability, availability, and awareness issues through collaborations between healthcare providers, policymakers, and community organizations.

Socio-cultural factors and stigma surrounding HIV also need to be addressed to create a supportive environment for serodiscordant couples. Reducing HIV-related stigma and promoting acceptance within families, communities, and healthcare settings can positively impact couples' engagement in preventive measures and care.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights the importance of understanding the factors contributing to HIV seroconversion in serodiscordant couples in Malaysia. Addressing sexual behaviors, improving adherence to ART, and expanding access to preventive measures are crucial steps in reducing HIV transmission risks within this population. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive interventions that encompass

behavioral, biomedical, and structural approaches to support serodiscordant couples and enhance their overall well-being. By implementing targeted strategies, Malaysia can work towards reducing HIV seroconversion rates and improving the quality of life for serodiscordant couples in the country.

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