

Within the health community, and among lesbian, gay and bisexual men, there is some confusion over whether or not this group need to undergo cervical screening; with the result that uptake of such services is often low in this group. Although research in this area is limited, evidence suggests that transmission of HPV (the cause of cervical cancer), is possible within this group and therefore regular cervical testing is required.

Gay men, particularly those who are HIV positive, have an increased risk of anal and cancer due to high rates of HPV with this group. Studies in the US have also found that HPV is overtaking tobacco and alcohol as the leading cause of oral cancer in men. Currently research is being undertaken exploring the effectiveness of offering the HPV vaccine to this group. While some campaigning groups and doctors are calling for regular anal smears to be made available to gay and bisexual men.

Next steps

Currently the evidence base relating to the health of LGBT communities and their experiences of cancer and cancer information, support and services is limited. Cancer Research UK therefore believes that in order to effectively provide services, which meet the needs of the LGBT communities, the Government and relevant stakeholders should commission and undertake research to better understand the:

- x Unmet need for information and support relating to cancer
- x Availability of charity and private sector information, support and services
- x Rates of lifestyle behaviours, which impact upon cancer rates
- x Cancer and HPV rates
- x Experiences of individuals when accessing health and cancer services
- x Awareness of the needs of LGBT communities among health professionals

Finally, much of the evidence relating to the health of LGBT communities is undertaken in other countries, mainly the USA. Undertaking UK based research and involving LGBT individuals in service development, would develop understanding of the health needs of this group further.

For more information contact Cancer Research UK's Policy and Public Affairs team on 020 7061 8360 or publicaffairs@cancer.org.uk

¹⁹ Douglas Scott et al. (2004) *Social Exclusion-Homophobia and health inequalities: a review* London: UK Gay Men's Health Network

²⁰ Hunt et al. (2007) *Being the gay one: Experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people working in the health and social care sectors* London: Stonewall

²¹ Douglas Scott et al. Idem

²² Bailey et al (2000) *Gays and cervical screening* British Journal of General Practice; 2000: 481-482

²³ Chaturvedi et al. (2008) *Evidence Trends for Human Papillomavirus-Related and Unrelated Oral Squamous Cell Carcinomas in the United States* Journal of Clinical Oncology 26: 612-619

²⁴ Dotinga, R. (2002) *More doctors suggest Pap smears for men*
<http://www.gay.com/news/article.html?2002/05/30/1>