

HIV self-test: perception and intention to use in a French nationwide study

P.-E. Devez¹, O. Epaulard^{2,3,4}

¹Université Grenoble Alpes, Pharmacy Faculty, La Tronche, France,

²Grenoble University Hospital, infectious diseases, Grenoble, France,

³Institut de Biologie Structurale, UMR5075 CEA CNRS UGA, HIV and other persistent viruses, GRENOBLE, France,

⁴Université Grenoble Alpes, Fédération d'Infectiologie Multidisciplinaire de l'Arc Alpin, GRENOBLE, France
paulemanueldevez@yahoo.fr ; OEpaulard@chu-grenoble.fr

Background

It is considered that 28,000 undiagnosed HIV-infected people live in France. This unawareness should be reduced, as it fuels HIV transmission, and leads to late-stages of HIV infection.

Since fall 2015, HIV self-test is available in French pharmacies without prescription. We aimed to explore perceptions toward this new testing tool, and whether people most at risk of HIV infection intent to use it, particularly MSM

Methods

An anonymous online questionnaire was diffused between November 2015 and January 2016 by different means, targeting the general population and MSM population. The questionnaire explored gender, age, sexual partner gender, self-perceived HIV exposure, the use of condom in case of sexual intercourse with penetration with another partner than the usual partner (if any), the knowledge and perceptions concerning of HIV self-test, and past and planned future use.

Results

1336 participants filled the questionnaire (male 67.1%, female 32.4%, other 0.5%; age 32.8 ± 12 years) (fig.1), including 889 who completed it.

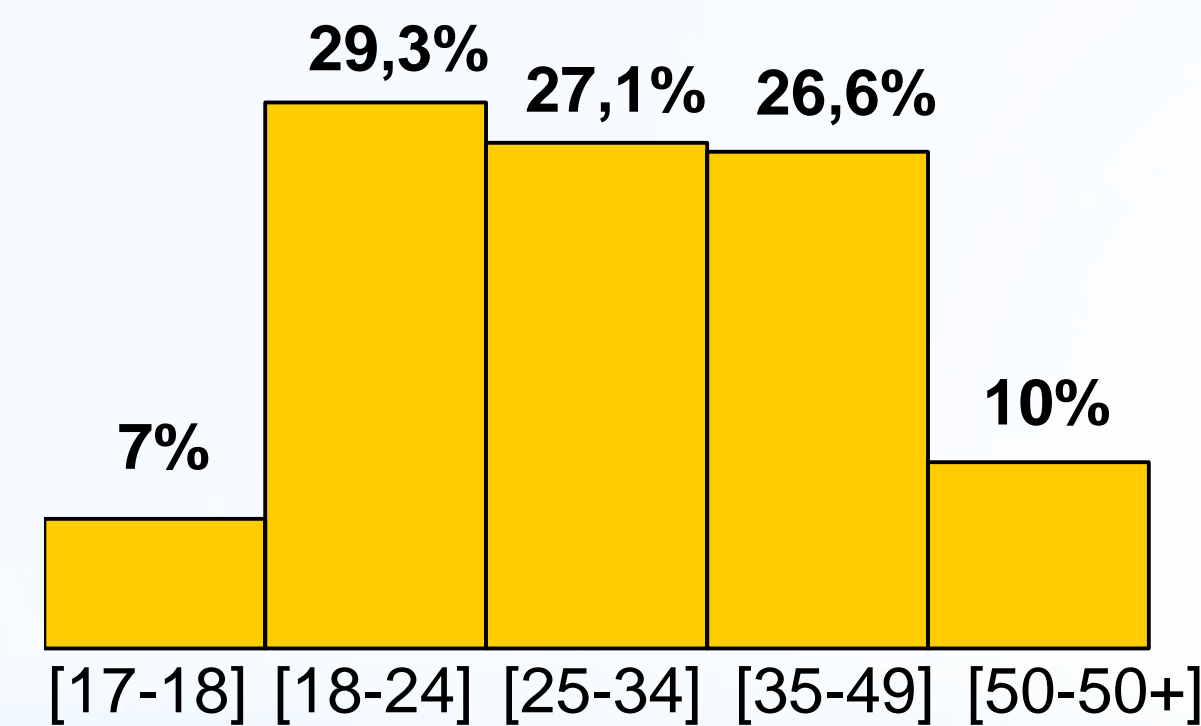


Fig.1 : Age of the population (years).

44.8% were MSM. 33.5% considered they were not exposed to HIV; 41.5% declared they did not always use or make use a condom in case of sexual intercourse with penetration with another partner than their usual partner (if any)(participants "objectively at risk").

9.9% had already used the self-test, this proportion being higher in multivariate analysis in those with a monthly income above 1000€, and those who declared being very/rather well informed on HIV. 38.5% declared they plan to use the self-test in the forthcoming month or year (fig.2). This proportion was lower in male and in MSM in multivariate analysis, and higher in those "objectively at risk".

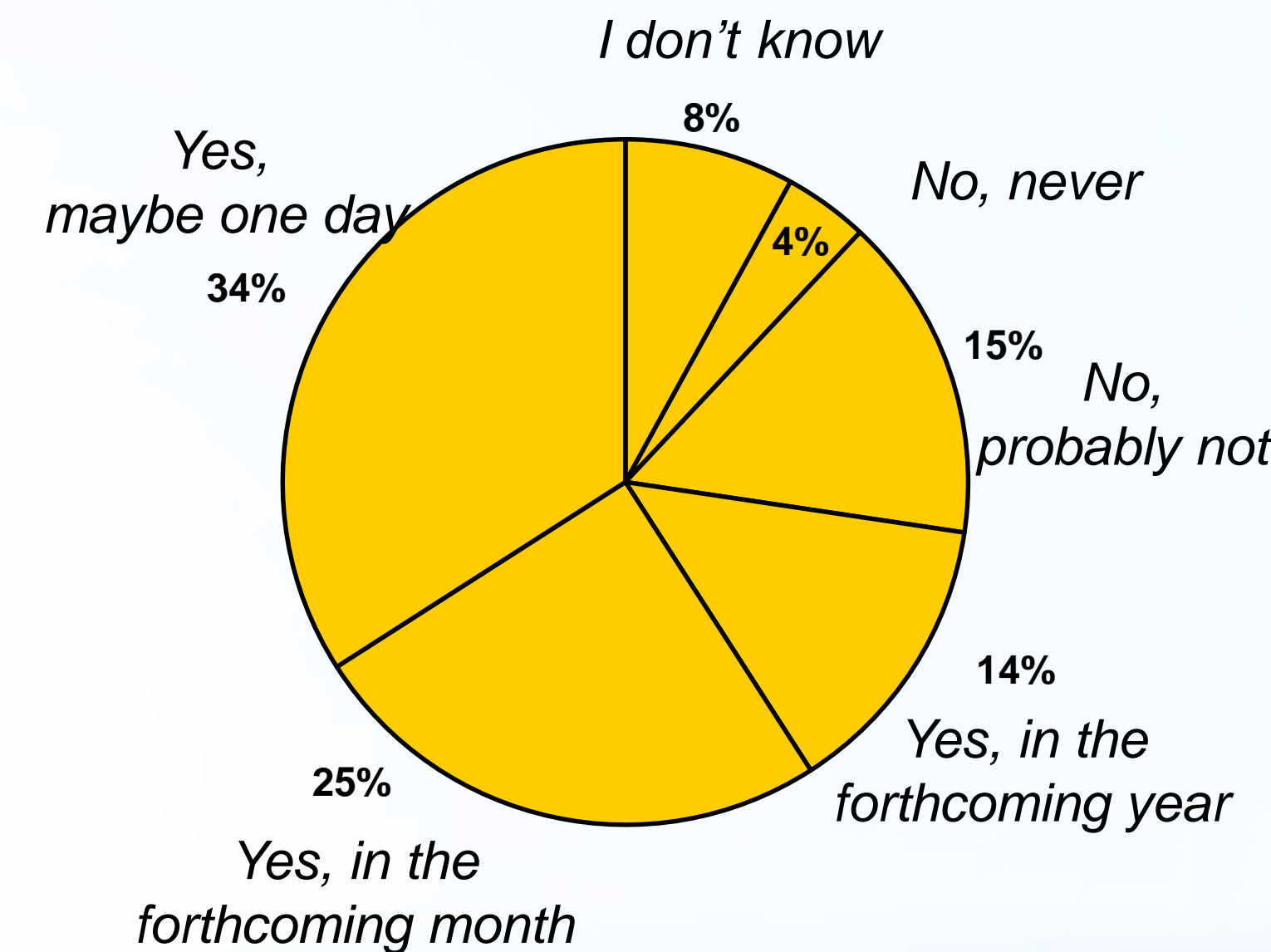


Fig.2: intention to use.

68.4% under-estimated the delay after an HIV exposure to rule out the infection with a self-test (window period, 12 weeks)(fig.3).

Over-estimated, more than 12 weeks

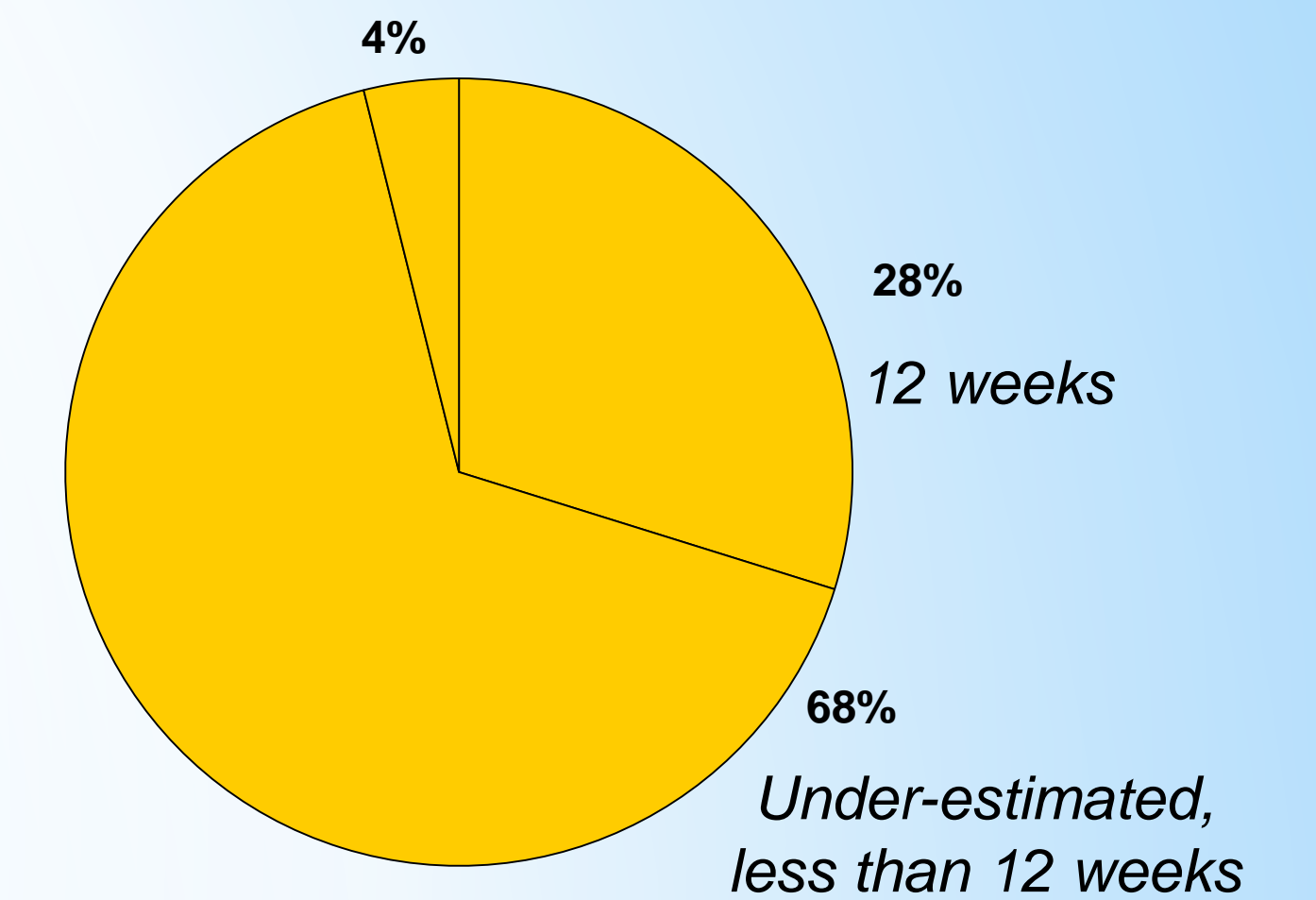


Fig.3 : knowledge of self-test window period.

The 3 issues with self-test more frequently cited were that it does not test for other sexually transmitted infection (49.5%), that you have to pay to get tested (44.4%), and that one is alone with his/her result (41.0%).

Conclusions

HIV self-test is identified as an interesting tool by different at-risk populations, and may help reducing the proportion of undiagnosed infections. Communication should insist on the delay for reliability. A much lower price may enhance its use.