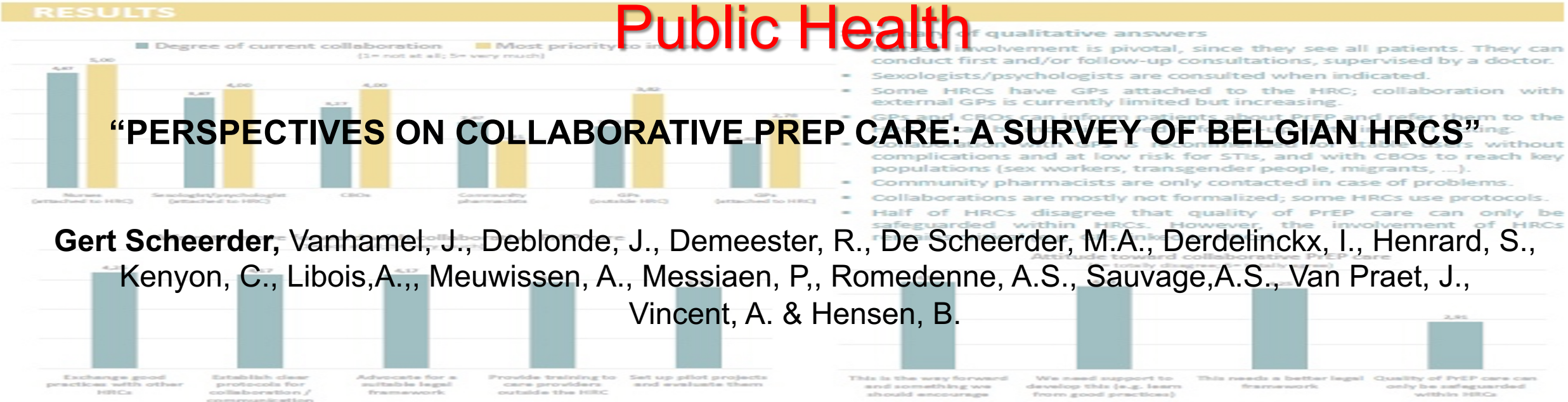


BACKGROUND

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is an effective way to prevent HIV and its use is increasing steadily. The growing number of PrEP users, however, puts pressure on specialists' workload, therefore a need is felt in exploring collaborative care. In Belgium, PrEP care is currently being delivered mostly through specialised HIV reference Centres (HRCs), but the experiences are being gained with PrEP care by nurses, GPs and CBOs. Before further exploring these avenues, we wanted to investigate the perspectives of HRCs on collaborative PrEP care.

METHODS

Within the Belgian PrEP Network's Working Group on Collaborative PrEP care a questionnaire was developed to assess current practices, attitudes, priorities and preferences of HRCs with regard to collaborative PrEP care. Five closed questions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale and four open-ended questions were included for further exploration. The survey was mailed to the HRCs in April 2023, with the instruction to provide a single response per HRC, reflecting the teams' opinion. All 12 Belgian HRCs participated in the survey.



Purpose

The HIV-1 subtype distribution in Belgium is highly heterogeneous. The evolution of the HIV-1 subtypes detected in 2022 in 4877 individuals newly diagnosed with HIV-1 who were treatment naïve, was studied. Special attention was given to sub-subtype A6, the dominant variant in the former Soviet Union (FSU) and a contraindication for Cabotegravir and Rilpivirine injectables.

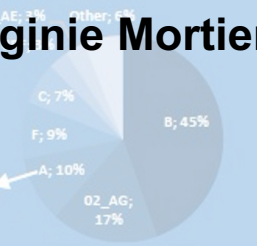
Study Subjects

- n = 4877
- HIV-1 positive
- Treatment naïve
- Newly diagnosed in Belgium

Time of diagnosis

2013 2022

Fig. A: Subtype distribution



Material and Methods

Subtypes were determined by phylogenetic analysis using PhyML v3.0 (HKY85 substitution model), ITOL v6.7.6 for tree visualization and ClusterPicker v1.2 for cluster analysis (bootstrap threshold 90%, genetic distance threshold 4.5%). For the individuals with sub-subtype A6 infections, year of diagnosis, origin and risk category were analysed as well.

Results

A. Characteristics of 21 individuals infecting the expanding sub-subtype A6 cluster

Of the 4877 individuals newly diagnosed between 2013 and 2022, 151 were infected with a virus of sub-subtype A6 (3%) (Fig. A and B). A significant increase in prevalence of sub-subtype A6 was observed since 2019 (7.0% of all infections from 2020 onwards versus 1.9% of infections from before 2020) (p<0.05) (Fig. C). The origin was available for 105 individuals, showing 40.0% Belgians and 48% people from the FSU (Fig. D). The risk category for individuals infected with a virus of sub-subtype A6 was available for 113 individuals. The overall distribution was 50% men having sex with men (MSM), 41% heterosexuals (HE), 17% injection drug users (IDU) (Fig. E).

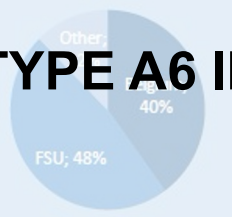
B. Characteristics of 21 individuals from expanding sub-subtype A6 cluster

Within the sub-subtype A6 branch of the phylogenetic tree, there were several indications for recent local transmission, including an expanding cluster of currently 21 individuals (Fig. B, H and I). Of the 16 patients with known origin in this cluster, 14 were Belgians (87%) and 2 Northern Africans (13%) (Fig. J). 15 of the 18 patients with known infection risk were MSM (83%) and 3 were HE (17%) (Fig. K).

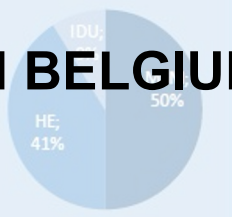
C. Evolution A6 diagnoses (%)



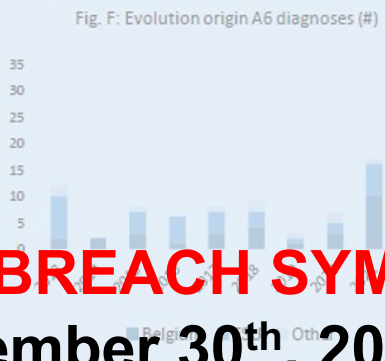
D. Origin A6 diagnoses



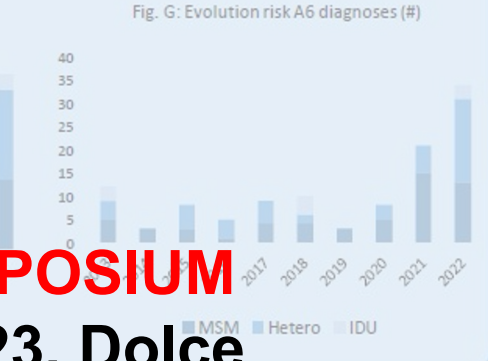
E. Risk A6 diagnoses



F. Evolution origin A6 diagnoses (#)



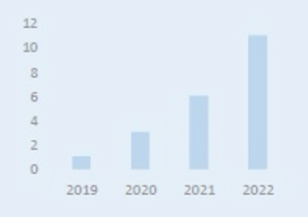
G. Evolution risk A6 diagnoses (#)



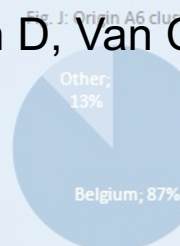
H. Details A6 cluster



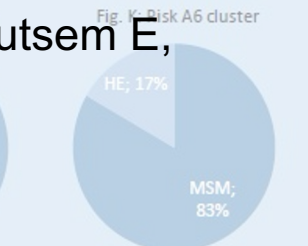
I. Expansion A6 cluster (#)



J. Origin A6 cluster



K. Risk A6 cluster



Conclusion

The prevalence of HIV-1 sub-subtype A6 is increasing significantly in Belgium since 2020 due to a growing number of people living with HIV originating from the FSU, as well as local transmission between mainly Belgian MSM.