Impact of providing ART to Medicare ineligibles

Richard T. Gray

Latest version - February 17 2015

This document summarises a simple analysis to calculate the impact of providing anti-retroviral therapy (ART) to people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Australia who are medicare ineligible. This analysis uses data from the Australian HIV Observational Database Temporary Residents Access Study (ATRAS) [1].The R code for these calculations is available in the associated Rmarkdown file. The aim of these calculations is to estimate the number of new HIV infections that occur through transmission from Medicare ineligible people to their sexual partners, the cost of providing ART to the Medicare ineligible population, and the potential future cost of providing treatment to partners of Medicare ineligibles who become infected.

This document is written in dynamic format using R markdown v2 within R studio 0.98.1056 (using R version 3.1.2). Plots are created using the package ggplot2. Further details are available in the associated R markdown file which also contains the R code to produce all the results when the markdown is run. Code blocks have been supressed in the output document.

### Methodogy

This section summarises the methodology used for the calculations. A simple mathematical model is used to caluclate the change in population size over time and the number of new infections in partners of medicare ineligible people. Model details, assumptions and input parameters are described below.

#### Demographics

For this analysis we consider a population of PLHIV who are medicare ineligible with the characteristics of people in ATRAS [1]. The overall population is split into heterosexual males and females, and males who are men who have sex with men (MSM) (which, for the purposes of this analysis, assume are exclusively homosexual). We assume females do not engage in sex work and the population does not include people who inject drugs (PWID). The proportion of people in each of these populations is based on ATRAS data and assumed to be constant over time. This comparmentalisation of the population is used to distinguish the risk of HIV infection rather than treatment coverage and adherence.

The number of medicare ineligibles can change over time with people becoming eligible for medicare provided ART and new temporary residents entering the population. This movement is represented by a constant growth rate for the population (which is positive for a growing population and negative for a declining population). . Letting equal the total population size in year , the number of medicare ineligible people in the population is then given by

. For this analysis we assume only a small change in the population over time so the overall population size is relatively constant.

#### Clinical characteristics

The main aim of this analysis is to investigate the impact on HIV transmission of providing all medicare ineligible people in ATRAS with ART. For the calculations we simply consider the proportion of the population taking ART and the proportion of those on ART with viral suppression. Both of these inputs can change over time based on the ATRAS data. We do not consider different proportions for each population group. The most recent data value is used for projections beyond the years of available data.

#### HIV transmission to partners

HIV transmission occurs through sexual intercourse between medicare ineligibles and their sexual partners. We assume initiating ART does not change sexual behaviour and the number of partnerships, sexual acts per partnership, and the level of condom use is similar to the overall Medicare eligible population in Australia - with behavioural parameters estimated using date from the Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships [2]. We also do not consider onward transmission from newly infected partners. As the sexual behaviour for the ART and non-ART population is the same, we use a simple risk equation approach with behavioural parameters set to reflect the overall annual risk of transmission rather than incorporating different partnership types and more complex sexual behaviours.

Key assumptions:

* HIV transmission from Medicare ineligibles is the same as for the Australian population overall.
* Those with unsuppressed virus have the same transmission risk as those not taking ART.
* Females and heterosexual males have the same risk of transmission.
* Transmission parameters are assumed constant over time.

REWRITE:(The largest assumptions affecting the results are the first two assumptions. We have no data describing the characteristics of partners of people ineligible for Medicare so we are unable to determine the proportion of partners who are HIV-positive or the characteritsics of these partnerships. The effect of these assumptions is too over estimate the annual number of new infections caused by people ineligible for Medicare. To ensure a realistic number of infections we calibrate the sexual behaviour parameters (primarily through the number of sexual acts) so that the number of new infections caused by people ineligible for Medicare as a percentage of the overall number of PLHIV is similar to the estimate for the overall Australian population (~3.9% in 2013 [3] and described in detail below). )

#### Costs associated with ART provision

Our analysis includes an estimate of the annual cost of providing ART, care and support to Medicare ineligibles and their partners who become infected. We obtained estimates of the costs of providing treatment and care to Medicare ineligibles using previous work for Australian settings [4]. For sexual partners of Medicare ineligibles who become infected with HIV we estimate the 'lifetime' cost of providing care and treatment.

#### Parameter table

Table 1 lists all input parameters and their values and ranges.

**Table 1** - Calculation input parameter ranges. Justifications for these parameter ranges are provided in endnotes. The simulations used for the calculations take samples from these ranges assuming a uniform distribution.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Parameter | Description | Range | Reference |
| **Demographic parameters** |  |  |
|  | Overall population size in initial year (2014) | [400 - 500] | 1 |
|  | Multiplicative change in annual population | [0.98 - 1.02]/yr | 1 |
|  | Proportion of Medicare-ineligible population of PLHIV who are MSM | [0.4 - 0.6] | 1 |
|  | Proportion of Medicare-ineligible population of PLHIV who are non-MSM | Given by | 1 |
| **Clinical parameters** |  |  |
|  | Proportion of population taking ART | 63% at enrolment and 95% after 12 months 5% | 2 |
|  | Proportion of population taking ART with undetectable viral load | 70% at enrolement, 88% after 12 months, and 96% after 24 months 5% | 2 |
| **HIV transmission paramaters** |  |  |
|  | Per act transmission probability from females to males | [0.0646234 - NA] | 3 |
|  | Per act transmission probability from males to females | [0.1027746 - NA] | 3 |
|  | Efficacy of ART in preventing HIV transmission if virus is suppressed | [0.9 - 0.99] | 4 |
| **Healthcare costs** |  |  |
|  | Avergae annual cost of providing ART | [$7,000 - $15,000] | 5 |
|  | Average lifetime cost of providing ART post infection (undiscounted) | [$640,546 - $1,067,577] | 6 |
|  | Dsicounting rate | 5% | 7 |

1. The 2013 ATRAS report estimates there are 450 Medicare ineligible PLHIV in Australia [1]. We assume a range in the population between 400 and 500 PLHIV with the potential for only a small change in population size over time. In the population of 180 at enrolment there were 47 females and 133 males in the cohort with 89 of the males attributing their HIV infection to MSM exposure [1]. Assuming the same demographic distribution over time, we assume 20-30% of the population is female, another 20-30% of the population are male heterosexuals with the remainder GBM.
2. At enrolment 62.8% of ATRAS patients were already receiving ART with 71.8% having undetectable viral load [1]. After enrolment all patients were put onto ART resulting in 87% having undetectable viral load at 12 months and 96% having undetectable viral load at 24 months [1]. Based on the ATRAS data we assume the percenatge of Medicare ineligibles on ART increases from 70% to 95% with a range of 5% with the proportion with undetecvtable virus increasing from 70% to 96% over two years with a range of 5%.
3. Beta CALCULATIONS
4. We assume those with viral suppression have a 96% reduction in transmission to their sexual partners in line with the results from the HPTN-052 trial for those with detectable drug [5].
5. At enrolement 83% of the ATRAS cohort on ART were taking Tenofovir/Emtrcitabine (Truvada) as the 'backbone' of their regime. This means the vast majority of those on treatment are taking first-line drugs. For this analysis we assume all patients are on and remain on first-line ART over the period of analysis. From Scheider et. al. the average annual cost of first-line drugs is $10,685 ($6,945-$14,424) [4]. Using this value we assume a range in the annual ART cost of $NA. Note Scheider et. al. estimate annual drug costs for third and higher lines of ART to be greater than $28,000 per year.
6. If a partner of a Medicare ineligible becomes infected with HIV then they will require care and eventually treatment while they are living in Australia. As we are not tracking their infection progression in this analysis we use an estimate for the lifetime cost of providing care and treatment. We found no data specifically for Australia, however, Schackman et al estimated the lifetime cost of HIV care in the United States in 2006 at $618,900 USD (undiscounted) for adults who initiate ART with CD4 350 cells/ L with a life expectancy of 24.2 years [6]. While pharmaceuticals are priced at a premium compared to Australia, this cost equates to $25,000 (undiscounted) per year of living with HIV which is comparable to the costs presented in endnote 11. For this analysis we use a value of $620,000 for the lifetime cost of caring and treating someone who becomes infected with HIV and assume a range of 25%.
7. DISCOUNTING calculations

#### Calculations for number of new infections caused by people ineligible for Medicare

We use simple risk-euqation calculations to estimate the number of people who become infected through partnerships with HIV-positive people ineligible for Medicare. Details of the calculations are provided in the appendix.

The total number of new infections is given by the sum of the infections caused by Medicare-ineligible general males, general females, and MSM each year. For each population, we first calculate the probabilty of infecting another person using an equation incorporating the number of sexual acts per year, condom use, ART use, and the level of viral suppression. The proportion of the population taking ART and with suppressed virus changes overtime matching the ATRAS data in Table 1.

Using this probability the number of new infections caused by Medicare-ineligibles each year is then estimated through sampling from a binomial distribution. Adding all the population terms together gives the overall number of new infections caused by Medicare-ineligibles in a given year and cumulatively over time.

#### Cost calculations

The total cost of providing ART to people ineligible for Medicare ineligibles is calculated by mutliplying the annual number of people ineligible for Medicare infected with HIV by the annual cost of providing ART and summing over the period of analysis. For sexual partners of Medicare-ineligibles who become infected with HIV we calculate the overall future lifetime cost of providing care and treatment to these people by multiplying the cumulative number of people who acquire infection by the lifetime cost reported in Table 1.

Discuss discounting.....

#### Simulations

To perform this analysis, we generated 100 input parameter sets by sampling from each of the parameter ranges in Table 1. For each of these parameter sets we then ran 20 simulations to account for stochastic variations. Each simulation was run for 6 years since the enrolment of patients into ATRAS. Summary statistics were then calculated using the results from each simulation.

### Results

During the first year after enrolement for ATRAS the number of new infections casued by Medicare ineligible people is estimated to be 22 (IQR:18.5 - 25.5). As a percentage of the infected Medicare-ineligible population this number of new infections equates to 4.9% of the population (Figure 1).

The impact of expanding ATRAS to all Medicare ineligbiles and acheiving almost universal viral suppression is to reduce annual new infections to a median of 5 (IQR:3 - 7) after 5 years (Figure 1). Corresponding to 1% of the Medicare ineligible population.

**Figure 1** - Annual number of new infections casued by HIV-positive Medicare ineligibles for each simulation. The grey lines represent the baseline simulations while the blue lines are for the expansion of ART to all Medicare ineligibles. The black and dark blue lines show the median number of new infections for the Baseline and expanded ATRAS simulations respectively.

Figure 2 shows the distributions for the cumulative number of new infections in partners of Medicare ineligibles for the baseline scenario and if ART is succesfully provided to all Medicare ineligibles. Providing treatment to all Medicare ineligibles will avert a median of 80 new infections (IQR: 67.5 - 92.5).

**Figure 2** - Total number of number of new infections (left) and the distribution in infections averted (right) over 5 years after all HIV-positive people ineligible for Medicare are provided ART.

Figure 3 shows the cumulative costs for providing ART to Medicare ineligible people and the resulting lifetime cost of providing care and treatment to the people they infected during this period. Providing ART to Medicare ineligibles over 5 years is estimated to a median cost of $28,990,000 (IQR: $24,155,275 - $33,831,511). For partners of Medicare ineligibles who become infected during this time the undisconted cost for providing them with care and treatment over the rest of their life is $40,515,943 (IQR: $34,056,769 - $46,975,117). This is a substantial reduction to the future estimated cost of providing care and treatment to people who acquire HIV through contact with people ineligible for Medicare (median $107,856,825:IQR $94,323,909 - $121,389,740) (Figure 3).

Adding the cost of providing treatment to all Medicare ineligibles and to the lifetime care cost of care and treatment for their partners who acquire infection gives an estimated cost of $40,515,943 (IQR: $61,324,446 - $77,712,266) (taking the median of this sum for each simulation). This cost is lower than the cost of providing care and treatment to newly infected people over their lifetime under the baseline scenario. Providing ART to Medicare ineligibles results in a saving over the longterm.

**Figure 3** - Median total costs for providing all Medicare ineligbles with ART and the lifetime care and treatment costs for partners of Medicare Ineligibles who acquire infection over 5 years. The bars show the interquartile range in total costs across all simulations.

#### Dicsussion - Comparison with number of new infections in Australia overall

To understand this rate of new infections we provide a comparison with correspodning estimates for the overall Australian population. In 2013 there was an estimated 26,640 PLHIV in Australia (with 9.4% unidagnosed) and there were estimated 912 new infections [3]. This equates to 3.4% rate of new infections per population living with HIV. This is lower than the rate of new infections caused by Medicare-ineligibles provided above. However, the level of ART provision and viral suppression in HIV-positive pople who are ineligible for Medicare is lower than for the overall Australian population. According to recent estimates of the HIV treatment and cascade 17,661 PLHIV received ART in 2013 (approximatley 66% of the overall number of PLHIV) with 93% having an undetectable viral load [7]. Nationally this means 62% of the overall population of PLHIV have viral suppression (compared to 43% of the ATRAS cohort at enrolement).

If we use use the national estimates for art use and viral suppression for PLHIV then we obtain a transmission rate of 4% for the population of Medicare ineligbles.

#### Appendix: Details of calculations

The overall number of new infections per year is calculated by summing the number of new infections caused by each population group; i.e.,

where is the given year.

Letting the index represent one of the populations groups (and droping for the time being), the probability of HIV transmission without ART is given by

or

For , the number of acts and condom use are equal and given by the index . Similarly we can incorporate the prevention effects of treatment and suppressed virus, to give the probability of transmission to a HIV-negative sexual partner

as ineffective treatment (resulting in unsuppressed virus) has the same transmission probability as no treatment. After some algebra this gives

Using this probability we can the number of new infections each year is given by a binomial distribution

For large N and this is approximately equal to

and the number of new infections is given by a risk equation. Given the relatively small population size and the high levels of ART coverage and viral suppression, likely resulting in a small number so infections, we use the stochastic approach in this anaylsis.

Adding all the population terms together gives the overall number of new infections in a given year . The cumulative number of new infections in partners of medicare ineligibles over years is then equal to

The total cost of providing ART and healthcare to Medicare ineligibles is then given by

and the future costs of providing care and treatment to newly infected partners of Medicare ineligibles is .

### References

1. Petoumenos K (2013) The australian hIV observational database temporary residents access study (aTRAS): one year follow-up.

2. Pitts M, Holt M, Mercer CH (2014) Introduction to the special issue on the second australian study of health and relationships. Sexual health 11: 381–382.

3. Jansson J, Kerr CC, Mallitt K-A, Wu J, T GR, et al. (n.d.) Inferring hIV incidence from case surveillance with cD4 counts. submitted to AIDS.

4. Schneider K, Gray RT, Wilson DP (2014) A cost-effectiveness analysis of hIV pre-exposure prophylaxis for men who have sex with men in australia. Clinical infectious diseases 58: 1027–1034.

5. Cohen M, Chen Y, McCauley M, Gamble T, Hosseinipour M, et al. (2011) Prevention of hIV-1 infection with early antiretroviral therapy. New England Journal of Medicine.

6. Schackman BR, Gebo KA, Walensky RP, Losina E, Muccio T, et al. (2006) The lifetime cost of current human immunodeficiency virus care in the united states. Medical care 44: 990–997.

7. Wilson DP (2014) The hIV care and treatment cascade in australia. Authors calculations.