

## **ASTDA Small project Assistance: Final Report**

**Date:** October 16, 2023

**Recipient:** Daniel Gore, MD, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center Department of Internal Medicine

**Project Name:** A Retrospective Chart Review of Anal Cytology and High-Grade Intraepithelial Lesion Screening Practices among High-Risk Populations in a Tertiary Care System

**Project Goals:** Anal cancer disproportionately affects certain populations including individuals with a history of HIV, gynecological malignancy, solid organ transplantation, autoimmune conditions, and those engaging in receptive anal sex behaviors such as Men who have Sex with Men (MSM). Screening for anal cancer may be performed through anal cytology tests, colloquially known as anal pap smears, occasionally coupled with anal human papillomavirus-co-testing. Individuals with any form of anal dysplasia on cytology results are typically referred for high resolution anoscopy (HRA), if accessible, where lesions may be biopsied, inspected for characteristic features of malignancy, and potentially ablated. Results from the ANCHOR trial (Palefsky NEJM 2022) demonstrate that HRA with lesion ablation is associated with reduced progression of high-grade dysplasia to anal squamous cell cancer among people with HIV (PWH), suggesting benefits to early screening, detection, and treatment of anal dysplasia. Despite potential benefits, anal cancer screening is limited by the lack of screening guidelines for higher-risk populations. The goal of this project is to investigate how anal cancer screening practices vary by patient demographics/ risk factors and provider characteristics in three Boston-area clinics affiliated with a tertiary-care academic medical center (Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center) and access to HRA. Our aim is to identify current inequities in screening and establish screening benchmarks in anticipation of future guidelines. This project was awarded \$2,250 by the ASTDA to fund housing, travel, food, registration, continuing medical education training, data analysis assistance, and other miscellaneous expenses associated with meeting ongoing project demands and presenting project findings in academic conferences.

**Project Achievements:** As a result of the generous small project assistance funding provided by the ASTDA, I was able to present research findings via two poster presentations in well regarded academic conferences. I first attended the *STI & HIV 2023 World Congress* where I presented a poster titled: “A Retrospective Chart review of Anal Dysplasia Screening Practices among High-Risk Populations in an Academic Medical System.” I later attended *IDWeek 2023*, where I presented a poster titled: “Health Care Provider Characteristics Associated with Anal Cancer Screening in an Academic Medical System.” As part of ongoing project research efforts, I am currently drafting two academic manuscripts—the first detailing the relationship between patient characteristics and anal cancer screening practices, the second analyzing the relationship between provider characteristics and screening practices. In addition to poster presentations and publications, our team is utilizing project findings to expand anal cancer screening services within Massachusetts. Our cohort is delivering a capstone presentation on November 20<sup>th</sup> to the Center for Healthcare Delivery Science at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center on methods of increasing anal cancer screening among higher-risk populations within the Beth Israel-Lahey Health System. We are also collaborating with MassHealth correspondents to discuss utilizing

financial reimbursement incentives to encourage screening practices within Massachusetts. In summary, the ASTDA small grants assistance program enabled our research group to present research findings in two conferences and continues to support our research cohort as we develop two scientific manuscripts and work with community stakeholders to increase anal cancer screening locally.