

PRiSM - HIV Prevalence and Risk behavioural Survey of Men who have sex with men in Hong Kong 2008

Background

The number of HIV reports in men who have sex with men (MSM) was increasing in recent years. The first PRiSM survey in 2006 revealed an HIV prevalence of 4.05%, which was many folds higher than that of other at-risk populations. Department of Health (DH) commissioned Chinese University of Hong Kong to repeat the PRiSM survey in 2008. It helped to understand the trend of HIV prevalence among MSM and provided data for planning of prevention activities.

Method

The methodology was in two phases, same as in 2006. The first phase included a mapping of gay venues and a response testing. The second phase was data collection and was conducted over a 6-week period between mid December 2008 and Jan 2009, in bar/club and sauna. Peer interviewers were openly recruited and trained. Men who had oral or anal sex with another man in the previous 6 months and have also stayed in Hong Kong over half of his time during the period were recruited into the survey. Those who had already participated in the survey in the past 2 months were excluded to avoid duplicated samples. The survey comprised collecting a urine sample for HIV antibody test and a self-administered standardised questionnaire on sexual behaviours, HIV testing and basic demographics. The urine samples were collected and treated in an unlinked and anonymous procedure so that the test result could not be traced back to the individual.

Result

24 venues were reached and valid samples were collected from 843 subjects - 470 from bars/clubs, 373 from saunas. The response rate in venue setting was 45%. About 40% of respondents were aged below 30. 96% were Chinese and 96% spoke Cantonese.

72% of respondents had received a free condom and 36% tested for HIV in the previous one year respectively. In previous six months, 45% of respondents who had anal sex with their regular sex partners always used a condom. Among those with anal sex with non-regular sex partners in Hong Kong, 75% always used a condom in the previous six months.

37 samples were tested HIV positive. The HIV prevalence of the MSM attending these settings was 4.31%, after adjustment for the sampling proportion.

Discussion

1. The survey in 2006 revealed that the prevalence in MSM was many folds higher than that of other at-risk populations, e.g. STD clinic attendees (0.13% in 2006), methadone clinic attendees (0.36% in 2006). The similar result in this round reconfirmed that seriousness of the problem.
2. The HIV prevalence in this round (4.31%) was slightly higher than that in 2006 (4.05%). The survey should be conducted regularly to monitor the situation.
3. DH and various non-governmental organisations intensively promoted HIV testing in recent two years. New testing services were set up. The testing rate within one year rose from 24% in 2006 to 36% in 2008, which signified an improvement.
4. At the same time, safer sex promotions were conducted. The condom use rates were similar in these two rounds. The condom use rates slightly increased from 41% for regular sex partners and 73% for non-regular sex partners in 2006 respectively. Although a slight increase was observed, a condom use rate of 80% has to be achieved to control the epidemic.

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