

HARiS - HIV and AIDS Response Indicator Survey 2016 for Male-to-female transgender

Background

Male-to-female transgender (TG) has been a neglected and hard-to-reach community, yet various overseas studies have shown that their HIV prevalence can be quite high. To better study the situation in Hong Kong, it has been included as one distinct at-risk populations in the HIV/AIDS Response Indicator Survey (HARiS) since 2014.

The aims of HARiS survey were to establish a community-based behavioural survey with collection of standardized strategic information; to provide data of a pre-defined set of core indicators among the major at-risk subpopulations for surveillance of HIV-related risk behaviours and HIV testing patterns; and to enable the indicators to be tracked and compared over time for evaluation of the coverage and effectiveness of health-promotion and surveillance programmes in Hong Kong.

The fourth HARiS was conducted in 2016 via commissioning to the Stanley Ho Centre for Emerging Infectious Disease, School of Public Health and Primary Care of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Methods

A total of three NGOs joined the survey. Participants were recruited via centre-based HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services (two NGOs), outreach service (one NGO) and online channel (one NGO) from April to June 2016. Any male who identify himself as female gender and ever had oral or anal sex with another man was invited to complete a self-administered questionnaire.

Results

A. Characteristics of participants

A total of 87 TG (centre-based: 23; outreach: 29; online: 35) were recruited from three NGOs. Over half were Chinese (60.9%), followed by Filipino (27.6%) and Thai (5.7%). About half (51.7%) were aged between 20 and 29 and more than half (56.3%) had stayed in Hong Kong for more than 3 months in the preceding 6 months.

B. Sexual behaviours

In the last 6 months, 41.4%, 31% and 36.8% of the respondents reported to have had sex with emotional relationship partners (ERP), regular sex partners (RSP) and non-regular sex partners (NRSP) respectively. The condom use rates in the last sexual intercourse were 55.6%, 63.7% and 84.4% with ERP, RSP and NRSP respectively. About one third of the participants (35.6%) had had sex with a commercial sex partner (CSP), and the condom use rate in last sexual intercourse was 96.8%.

C. HIV testing behaviours

Of all 87 respondents, 57 (65.5%) respondents had ever had an HIV test, and 56 (98.2%) were able to recall their HIV test results. 50 participants (57.5%) had their last test in the preceding 1 year and 50 of them (57.5%) remember their last HIV test results.

NGOs was the most commonly reported place of last HIV test, accounting for 56.1% of all ever-testers respectively, followed by private sector (22.8%) and public sector (14%).

D. Substance abuse and alcohol use

Of all respondents, 32.2% and 10.3% reported to have taken alcohol or drugs respectively before or during sex in the last 6 months. Poppers (66.7%) and ice (44.4%) were the commonest drugs used.

Discussions

1. Except with CSP, there is a drop in the condom use rate among TG with all other groups of partners including NRSP, RSP and ERP. The condom use rate with ERP is down to 55.6% compared to 82.1% last year. Health promotion on safer sex and condom use should be emphasised.
2. The overall ever HIV testing rate has decreased from 78.8% in 2015 to 65.5% in 2016. This is suboptimal. Health promotion regarding regular HIV testing should be strengthened in this population group.
3. This survey showed that a significant proportion of this population is non-Chinese (37.9%). They were less likely to access centre-based services for HIV related services. Therefore, outreach services (with peer involvement if possible) should be the main way of contacting this population for HIV prevention and HIV testing.

FACTSHEET on HARiS for TG 2016

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