

PRiSM - HIV Prevalence and Risk behavioural Survey of Men who have sex with men in Hong Kong 2006

Background

The number of HIV reports in men who have sex with men (MSM) was increasing in recent years but the infection rate in MSM community was not available. It was difficult to understand the reason of increasing HIV infections. Department of Health, AIDS Concern and the Chinese University of Hong Kong planned the first HIV prevalence survey in MSM in Hong Kong in 2006.

Method

The survey was conducted in two phases. The first phase included a mapping of gay venues and a response testing. The second phase was the data collection. The second phase was conducted from mid December 2006 to Jan 2007, total 6 weeks, in 3 settings: bar/club, sauna, internet. Twelve peer interviewers were involved to recruit participants. Only 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. Those who had participated in the survey 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 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.

Results

21 venues/settings were reached and valid samples were collected from 859 subjects - 400 from bars/clubs, 459 from saunas. Only 4 samples were collected from internet setting and thus excluded. The response rate in venue setting was 45%. The age range of respondents was 15-73 with a median age of 31. 89% were Chinese and 92% spoke Cantonese.

37 samples were tested HIV positive. After adjusted for the sampling proportion, the HIV prevalence of the MSM attending these settings was 4.05%.

Strengths and Limitations

1. This is the first community-based seroprevalence survey in MSM in Hong Kong. With a fair sample size and coverage over most major gay venues, it greatly improved the understanding of HIV situation in MSM community.
2. The response rate of this survey was not high but reasonable as compared to similar studies.
3. The samples only were recruited from bars/clubs and saunas only. It may limit the generalisability of findings to the other MSM populations, e.g. internet users, party goers, because of unknown catchment proportion.

Implications

1. The HIV prevalence was many folds higher than that of other at-risk population in Hong Kong, e.g. STD clinics attendees (0.13% in 2006), methadone clinic attendees (0.36% in 2006). It was also higher than the positivity of AIDS Concern outreach and other clinic setting HIV voluntary testing programme. The data suggested that the situation may be more serious than we expected.
2. The HIV prevalence from this survey was close to the result of similar surveys conducted in our neighbouring cities or countries. This suggested the MSM epidemic in Hong Kong was a part of the regional problem. (Table 1)
3. By comparing the estimated infected population and no. of HIV reports, the result indicated many HIV-infected persons did not know their status yet. HIV testing in the gay community should be heavily promoted. Table 2 listed the testing resources in Hong Kong.
4. This exercise should be conducted regularly, say yearly in the near future, to monitor the situation.

PRiSM 2006 Steering Group

Table 1. HIV prevalence of MSM population in some neighbouring cities or countries

Country/City	HIV prevalence
Beijing	3.1%
Tokyo, Japan	4.4%
Vietnam	6-8%
Taiwan	8%
Bangkok, Thailand	28.3%

Source: Treat Asia report: MSM and HIV/AIDS risk in Asia. New York: AmFar, 2006.

* Because of difference in methodology, the prevalence data can be used for reference only but not direct comparison.

Table 2. HIV testing services in Hong Kong

- Department of Health's Gay Man HIV Testing Hotline
Tel: 21171069
Website: www.21171069.com
- Social Hygiene Clinics, Department of Health
Website: www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele_chc/tele_chc_shcm.html
- AIDS Concern
Tel: 2898 4411 /8203 3551 (Joe/Tim)
Website: www.men2mentesting.com (VCT walk-in schedule)
- Hong Kong AIDS Foundation
Tel: 2513 0513
Website: www.man-d.net
- C.H.O.I.C.E
Tel: 3188 9024
Website: www.communityhealth.org.hk
- Midnight Blue (For Male Sex Workers Only)
Tel: 81078983
- Private medical practitioners

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