

HARiS - HIV and AIDS Response Indicator Survey 2015 for Injecting Drug User

Background

In Hong Kong, the number of HIV cases transmitted through injecting drug use (IDU) has remained low up till now and contributed to less than 5% of all reported cases cumulatively. However, the potential risk of cluster outbreak and rapid upsurge of infection among the IDU population is always a concern. To monitor HIV-related risk behaviours and access to HIV testing services among IDU, this population has been included as one of the four at-risk populations in the HIV/AIDS Response Indicator Survey (HARiS) implemented since 2013. The third round of survey was conducted in 2015 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.

The aims of HARiS survey was 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.

Method

Participants were recruited from NGO drop-in centre (one NGO) and outreach service (two NGOs) from June to August 2015. The inclusion criteria was "any person who had ever injected drugs (IDU)". Any person who fulfilled the inclusion criteria was invited to complete an interviewer-administered questionnaire. However, due to some technical difficulties for only recruiting only IDU in the above two settings, "any person who had ever used opiate or recreational drugs" was also recruited, but only those who ever had history of injecting drug use would be included in the analysis.

Results

A. Characteristics of participants

A total of 781 participants (51 centre-based and 730 from street-outreach) were recruited. The majority were male (91.9%). Chinese ethnicity accounted for 89.2%, followed by Nepalese (7.0%) and Vietnamese (2.6%). Age group over 50 years (48.8%) was the commonest age group, followed by 40-49 (30.1%), 30-39 (16.4%) and 20-29 (4.6%).

B. Drug injection behaviours

Among all, 89.1% had injected drug in the past 1 month, of which 13.9% had shared injection equipment with other people and 4.1% has shared outside usual network.

C. Sexual behaviours

In the past 6 months, 52.4%, 28.6% and 24.1% of the participants had had sex with a regular sex partner (RSP), non-regular sex partner (NRSP) and commercial sex worker (CSW) respectively. The condom use rates in the last sex were 69.9%, 96.4% and 99.5% respectively.

D. HIV testing behaviours

Overall, 95.9% of the participants had ever been tested for HIV, 72.2% had their last test within 12 months, and 63.0% had their last test within 12 months and knew the results. The most commonly reported places of having the last HIV test were Methadone Clinics (91.7%) and NGOs (5.3%).

Discussions

1. The HIV testing rate decreased slightly from 77.4% in 2014 to 72.2% this year. The methadone clinics in Hong Kong had implemented universal HIV urine testing programme (MUT) to all drug user attendees in a yearly cycle since 2004, enhancement of publicity and promotion of the testing programme is needed in order to further increase the testing rate among drug users.

2. The share needle rate in the past one month decreased significantly (13.9%) from around 25% in previous years. This change was seen particularly in participants recruited near Methadone clinic. Although the finding was improved, the potential risk of local cluster outbreak and sudden upsurge of HIV infection among injecting drug users cannot be neglected. HIV prevention efforts and education on the risk of needle sharing among the population is crucial and should be maintained.

3. The last condom use rate with regular sex partners (69.9%) and commercial sex partners (99.5%) were similar with last year's finding (70.6% and 98.7% respectively) and last condom use rate with casual sex partners was increased from 88.4% in 2014 to 95.4% this year. Among these three types of sexual partners, the last condom use rate with regular sex partners was still much lower than that of the other two groups. Health promotion on safer sex about consistent condom use with all partner types needs to be strengthened.

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