

HARiS - HIV and AIDS Response Indicator Survey 2015 for Men who have Sex with Men

Background

Men who have sex with men (MSM) has continued to account for a significant proportion of newly acquired HIV infections in Hong Kong. To keep on tracking the epidemic and inform intervention, MSM population has been included as one of the five major at-risk populations in the HIV/AIDS Response Indicator Survey (HARiS).

The aims of HARiS 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 third HARiS 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.

Methods

Participants were recruited via centre-based HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services (by 8 Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and outreach sessions (by 5 NGOs) from March to June 2015. Any man who had ever had oral or anal sex with another man was eligible in the survey and be invited to complete a self-administered questionnaire. An online version of the questionnaire was also developed and disseminated by 4 NGOs during internet outreach programmes.

Results

A. Characteristics of participants

A total of 1091 MSM (centre-based: 601; outreach: 260; online: 230) were recruited via the eight supporting NGOs. A vast majority was Chinese (96.9%), aged between 20 and 39 (79.7%); 878 (80.5%) have stayed in Hong Kong for more than 3 months in the preceding 6 months.

B. Sexual behaviours with different kinds of sex partners

In the preceding 6 months, 49.1%, 36.8% and 47.9% of the respondents reported to have had anal sex with emotional relationship partners (ERP), regular sex partners (RSP) and non-regular sex partners (NRSP) respectively. The condom use rates in the last anal sex were 65.7%, 73.6% and 81.1% with ERP, RSP and NRSP respectively. Only 11.7% of the participants had had sex with commercial male sex partners (CSP), and the condom use rate in last anal sex was 96.1%.

C. HIV testing behaviours

Of all 1091 respondents, 845 (77.5%) had ever received HIV test and 825 (75.6%) knew their last test results. However, only 663 (60.8%) had their last test in the preceding 1 year and 648 (59.4%) knew their last HIV test results.

The most commonly reported venue for last HIV test was NGOs (70.9%), followed by public service sector (social hygiene clinics, public hospitals/clinics or DH Kowloon Bay Health Centre) (11.7%) and private sector (6.7%).

D. Substance abuse and alcohol use

Of all respondents, 27.7% and 11.8% reported to have taken alcohol or drugs respectively before or during sex in the last 6 months. The commonest drug used is poppers (70.5%), drugs for erectile dysfunction (42.6%) and ice (20.2%).

Discussions

1. The overall percentage of condom use in the last anal sex with ERP was only 65.7%, which was similar to the findings of previous HARiS results, but still not optimal. Health promotion on safer sex with consistent condom use with all partner types needs to be strengthened in the MSM community.
2. The percentage of condom use at last anal sex with commercial sex partners was 96.1%, which was higher than the 89.1% in 2014 and 69.9% in 2013. This finding was encouraging and might suggest an increase in awareness of safer sex among MSM when they patronised sex workers.
3. Overall ever HIV testing rate (77.5%) and HIV testing rate in past one year (60.8%) dropped slightly in this survey, as compared to findings of 78.5% and 62.3% in 2014. Promotion of annual HIV test for all MSM should be strengthened in the MSM community.

FACTSHEET on HARiS for MSM 2015

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