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Track C - Prevention programmes for men who have sex with men (MSM)

CDC0845 - Assessment of HIV prevention among MSM in the Pacific

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Background: Men who have sex with men are especially vulnerable to HIV infection compared to the general population (FHI, 2006), not only because of their sexual orientation, but also because of prevailing stigma and discrimination against homosexuality in the society. In many Pacific countries including Papua New Guinea, sex between men occurs but in secrecy. It is a taboo that is neither accepted nor discussed. This study investigated the behaviour and sexual practices of MSMs, their knowledge of STI/HIV prevention, and access to services to inform an intervention program on male sexual health and STI/HIV prevention.

Methods: A cross sectional qualitative study was done in 2005 and 2007. Site observations and 24 interviews were recorded and manually analysed.

Results:

SEXID	PARTNER SHIP	USE CONDOM	KNOW CONDM	KNOW SERVICES	KNOW STI/HIV
STRAIGHT (4)	Multiple (2/4)	Sometimes (1/4)	Yes (4/4)	Yes (4/4)	Yes (3/4)
BAISEXUAL (12)	Multiple (11/12)	Sometimes (9/12)	Yes (12/12)	Yes (11/12)	Yes (10/12)
HOMO-GAY (8)	Multiple (8/8)	Sometimes (5/8)	Yes (8/8)	Yes (8/8)	Yes (7/8)

[Table of results]

Findings show increased knowledge in STI/HIV and condom use in relation to prevention. Many also reported accessing a number of service providers including VCT and drop in centres. In contrast, inconsistent condom use was commonly reported which may be due to ignorance and influence of substances use. Multiple concurrent sexual relationship has also been widely reported among MSMs. Stigmatizing behaviour was observed to be expressed freely towards MSMs in almost all walks of life.

Conclusions: Although there are positive indications in the knowledge of STI/HIV and condom, the opposite is reflected in sexual partnerships and actual condom use which may provide a transmission bridge to the general population. In addition, boundaries in tradition and religion relating to male sexuality, proves a barrier to appropriate services and information.