

**Hazardous alcohol consumption
and HIV risk behaviour among
female commercial sex workers in
Bangkok, Thailand**
Preliminary Findings

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Background

- CSW an occupational group at risk of developing hazardous and harmful alcohol use
- CSW who work in licensed premises at risk of drinking alcoholic beverages prior to and during work
- occupational and social lifestyle characteristics and pressures may lead to regular, hazardous consumption

Background

- More than 600 studies on link between drinking and risky sex BUT few on CSW
- Most show association but are cross-sectional
- Philippine study of CSW found more frequent sex risk behaviours if alcohol consumed before commercial sex or if the customer appeared intoxicated (Chio C. 2006)
- Tanzanian study of female bar workers found that HIV infection associated with problem drinking (OR 1.9 CI 1.06-3.44) (Ao T. 2006)

Background

- Zimbabwean study of CSW customers found having sex while intoxicated associated with HIV seroconversion (Fritz K. 2002)
- Thailand study of military conscripts found alcohol consumption associated with inconsistent condom use when having sex with CSW. (MacQueen K 1996)
- Dutch study found bars CSW's had higher alcohol consumption than other CSW's but didn't affect condom use (de Graff R. 1995)

Background

- Excessive drinking may moderate:
 - likelihood they require condom use
 - Other specific high-risk sexual risk behaviours
- This may place them at high risk of infection

Study design

- investigate the extent of hazardous and harmful drinking patterns
- first stage of a research and development intervention project
- case-control (case-referent) design and compares HIV risk and other health behaviours between a 100 FCSW who are hazardous drinkers (8+ AUDIT) with 100 who are at low risk of hazardous drinking

Measures

- Demographics
- General health information
- Past history of sexually transmitted infection

Measures

- self-reported measures of drinking and other drug use
- modified time-line follow-back
 - general drinking past 12 months
 - detailed assessment past 90 days
- ecological analysis of the people, places, purposes and consequences of drinking
- AUDIT

Measures

- self-reported measures of blood borne viral risk behaviour for regular, casual and customer contacts
- Knowledge and attitude about HIV risk-taking behaviour
- Knowledge about HIV risk reduction strategies

demographics

- 25 cases and 55 controls (6 or greater drinks on single occasion)
- Work environment:
 - Around one third work in karaoke
 - Around one third work in massage parlour
 - Rest work in go-go bars, pubs or tea rooms
- Heavy alcohol consumers younger (48% aged 20 to 24 years)
- Majority of sample:
 - come from either north-east Thailand or central region
 - have at least some secondary school education
 - Rent an apartment for accommodation
 - Send money home to the family each month (90%)
 - Average 4- 6000 baht per month
 - Around 60% have 1 to 3 close friends

Other substance use

- heavier alcohol consumers more likely to:
 - Ever consumed cannabis (64% versus 27%)
 - used cannabis last year and last 30 days
 - Ever consumed and ecstasy (40% versus 22%)
 - Used ecstasy last year and last 30 days
 - Ever consumed sleeping pills (56% versus 29%)
- Heavy alcohol consumers equally likely to ever consumed methamphetamine (around 34%)

Attitudes to condom use

- Majority of **Participants** agreed:
 - Easy to talk about using condoms
 - Not difficult to get new customers to use condoms
 - Not a hassle to remember to carry condoms
 - Not difficult to put a condom on before having sex
 - Condoms do not interrupt having sex

Attitudes to condom use

- Majority of **Participants** agreed:
 - It is not embarrassing to put a condom on the customer
 - Customers won't get angry if you ask them to use a condom

Attitudes to condom use

- **However majority** of participants also agreed:
 - Some customers start using condoms and then want unprotected sex
 - it is hard to refuse a customer who doesn't want to wear a condom

Attitudes to condom use

- **Large minority** of participants also agreed:
 - Having sex without a condom is ok if the customer pays more (20% versus 9%)
 - It is embarrassing to dispose of condoms after having sex (24% versus 14%)
 - The customer will think you have an infection you ask them to use a condom (20%)

Sexually transmitted symptoms

- Heavy Alcohol consumers more likely to report in last 12 months:
 - vaginal redness (48% versus 40%)
 - unusual vaginal discharge (36% versus 26%)
 - pain or bleeding passing urine (20% versus 13%)
 - Irritation or discharge from anus (12% versus 2%)
 - Discomfort when having sex (48% versus 35%)

Caveats

- Self report incomplete data
- Preliminary interpretation of crude data
- No corrections for covariates

So what?

- Targeting drinking to reduce risky sex can only be effective if drinking is causally related to such behaviour.
- The question is who's drinking do you target and which intervention(s) will be effective in the context of commercial sex?