

“HIV/AIDS Research and Testing among Sex Workers” in Turkey

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Background

- General objective of the research on “HIV/AIDS Research and Testing among Sex Workers” was to determine the frequency of HIV infection among male and female sex workers, gathering data about awareness level, behaviour and attitudes about HIV/AIDS and comparing them with test results, thus identifying their needs. The research project was carried out in Ankara, Turkey, in 2009.



Methods

- A community-based service model was used for this project.
- The project coordinator selected 10 field workers among the sex workers who were identified as the target group with a view to implementing this model.
- A total of 12 persons, including the project coordinator and the field coordinator attended a one-day training program prior to the commencement of field work.

Methods

- Trained field workers gave visits to the aimed target group in their own surroundings (bars, nightclubs, cafes, residences, parks, etc.) and met with the sex workers who would take part in the research.
- A total of 200 sex workers, including 100 biological women and 100 transgender individuals were identified as the target group of the research.
- An equal number of individuals from both groups were selected in order to make a comparison of HIV infection incidence between sex workers from both groups and to reveal differences in terms of awareness level, behavior, and attitude.

Methods

- The questionnaires were applied to these 200 individuals in order to gather basic data about the respondent, including his/her age, gender, education and to question his/her risky sexual behaviour patterns.

Methods

- After applying the questionnaires, each respondent visited the test consultant at the agreed time and firstly completed pre-test consent forms which were signed by the consultant. The test consultant provided pre-test counseling which lasted between 30 and 45 minutes through one-on-one meetings and this services comprised the following topics:
 - What is HIV/AIDS?
 - How is HIV transmitted?
 - Events which does not cause HIV transmission
 - What are methods of prevention against HIV?
 - When should HIV tests be conducted?
 - When are clinical symptoms observed?
 - What are the main highlights of treatment available today?



Methods

- Following pre-test counseling by the consultant, HIV tests were applied using ELISA test method.
- Most of the sex workers did not receive the results of their HIV tests.
- 75 out of 100 transgender sex workers and 21 out of 100 biological women learned the results of HIV tests from the test consultant. 96 out of 200 respondents got their test results while 104 declined to do so.

Methods

- Persons for whom Western Blot confirmation test was positive, the test consultant provided post-test counseling.
- Interviews were held with both groups until the attainment of the goals when the project was terminated.

Results

- Five members of the 100 transgender sex worker group were found to be HIV positive at the end of the study. No HIV positive biological woman was identified in the group.
- Sex workers are highly aware of HIV/AIDS. According to an overall assessment, there is not a meaningful variation among sex workers in different education levels in terms of the frequency of using condoms. Transgender sex workers graduated from a primary school use condoms more frequently than those who are literate.



Results

- 40% of the respondents who are HIV positive have received no education or counseling about HIV/AIDS.
- Transgender sex workers in the younger age bracket use condom in their intercourses less frequently than the older group.

Conclusion

- In the few studies conducted in Turkey, the HIV/AIDS prevalence among sex workers has been set out as 2.5%. In this research which has been conducted on biological women and transgenders, the prevalence was 5%.
- The increase in the number of patients among sex workers is directly reflected in the population.

Conclusion

- These findings also partially explains the increase in the overall number of patients in Turkey.

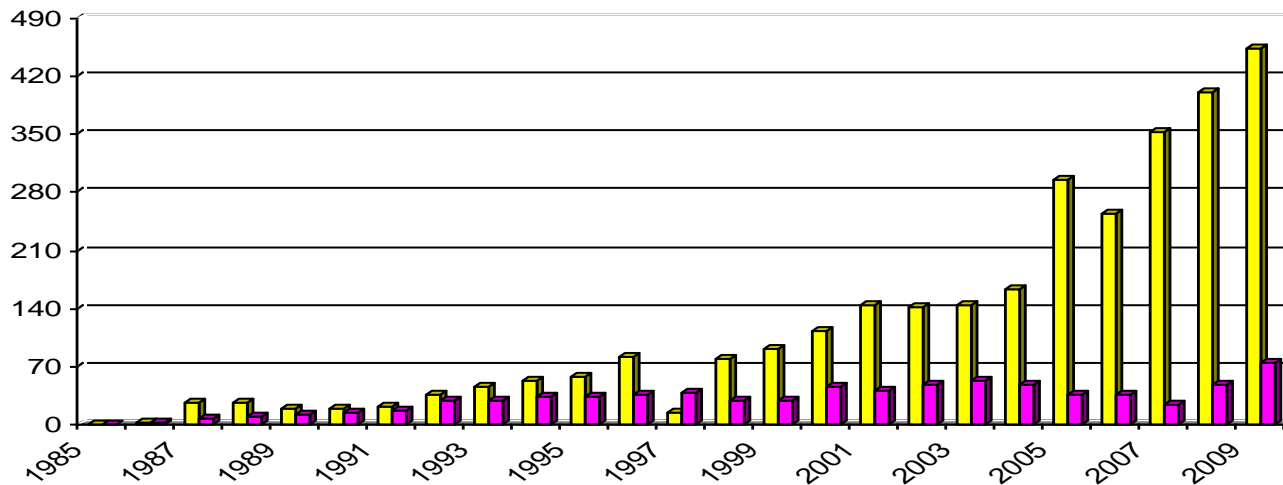
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Breakdown By Year of HIV/AIDS Cases

October 1985 – December 2009

N:3898

■ HIV (+) ■ AIDS



Conclusion

- The gravity of the problem can be understood only by means of large-scale studies. Such a large-scale study about the issue has not been conducted in Turkey to date. But, it is imperative that available data is assessed and used for development of education programs.