HIV prevention among female sex workers: Global lessons

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Presentation Outline

• Global epidemiology of sex work & HIV risk

• Social context of adherence to biomedical interventions:
  • Parejas study in Mexico
  • Contexts of sex work in Sub-Saharan Africa

• Summarize & ask questions on the horizon
Map 2.1  Map of HIV Prevalence among Female Sex Workers in Low and Middle Income Countries including Data from 2007–11 Categorized by HIV Prevalence and Pooled HIV Prevalence Estimates by Region

HIV+ = 37%

Source: Kerrigan, et al. 2013
Promising interventions?

- STI diagnosis & treatment
- HIV testing & counseling; care & treatment
- Vaccine development?
  - Vaginal microbicides
  - PreP

- Efficacy is linked to adherence ...
Proyecto Parejas

• Study of HIV/STI risk among female sex workers & non-commercial partners (e.g., husbands, boyfriends)

• Recruited 214 couples total
  • 106 in Tijuana, 108 in Ciudad Juarez
Perceptions of microbicides

- High acceptability (89%) & ability to discuss (85%)
- BUT 16% concerned about partner’s anger (21% of women)

Female empowerment:
*It would be super perfect because it would be like extra protection that I’d be responsible for... I’d be in charge of myself, of my body, of my health, and I wouldn’t have to put my life in someone else’s hands.* – “Cindy,” 29 years old, Tijuana

Infidelity & suspicion:
*Well, I’d be a little bit uncomfortable because she tells me that she [uses condoms] ... But I’ve heard that people sometimes offer more money for sex without condoms. So if she tells me, “Hey, let’s use this gel,” well, I’m going to trust her a little bit less and it will make me think something . . . “Juan,” 29 years old, Juarez
Implications

Female-controlled methods should involve male partners

Require different approaches:

- Improved risk communication & negotiation skills
- Counseling & anger management

Shift the focus away from “risk” → emphasize positive relationship qualities, protecting each other

Robertson, Syvertsen, et al. 2013
Applicable to the African context?

**Nigeria** (Eluwa, et al. 2013):
- Decrease in HIV prevalence, but still 20% among FSWs
- Significant decline in condom use with boyfriends
  → Need for further biomedical interventions & account for intimate relationships

**Kenya** (Van der elst, et al. 2013):
- Qualitative data on PreP
  - Acceptability was high
  - Social consequences
  - Adherence challenges
Challenges of addiction

• Alcohol & drug use, violence, adverse health, & HIV risk (Chersich et al. 2007; Wechsberg et al. 2006; Li et al. 2010)

• Women who inject drugs in Kenya → Hidden, stigma

... She is a common prostitute, she is a woman that when we sit, even 20 people, we count that all of us have had sex with her. She belongs to the base [group of injectors] and as long as you have fifty shillings or there’s a dose you can give her ...

- “Robert,” HIV+ and pays for sex
Promise in state-of-the-art biomedical interventions for sex workers...

Need for continued HIV intervention efforts

Social realities shape adherence
  • Relationships matter
  • How woman-controlled?

Overlap in key populations
  • Silo funds into programs
  • Better integration?
THANK YOU
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