The Impacts of Sexual Behaviours on HIV Infections in Men Who Have Sex with Men in the Pacific Region

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Issues:
Previous research demonstrates that’s gaps in HIV/AIDS/STIs awareness and prevention show increase vulnerability among th MSM Communities. Little is known about the prevalence of awareness of HIV transmission of Pacific MSM sexual behaviour . MSM who engage in male to female behaviours maybe a bridge to HIV transmission in the heterosexual populations.

Description:
Studies of HIV/AIDS/STIs in the Pacific Region are limited and do not provide tools for evidence informed policies and programs. Papua New Guinea record the highest levels of HIV in the Pacific. Currently 1.8% of the adults in the Pacific is HIV Positive. By the year 2015 research predicts a 10% prevalence of HIV amongst adults. The projection suggests that men who engage in bisexual behaviour and men who do not identify as homosexual may be a source of HIV infection amongst adults.

To further assessment, FHI commissioned a qualitative and quantitative survey in MSM populations in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. 223 men were surveyed. Men reported sexual behaviour and any signs of symptoms of STIs in the last 12 months. Urethral discharge reported by 27.9% and genital ulcers reported by 23.9%. 23% of MSM self identified as homosexual and practised commercial sex. A quarter of the sample is married to female partners.

Lessons learned:
The respondents in Port Moresby demonstrated a lack of knowledge of HIV/AIDS/STIs transmission and the proper use of condoms. The sample reported barriers to health care, education and condoms. Alcohol use reflects a high increase number of high sexual behaviours in the study population.

Next steps:
The results of the study demonstrate the immediate need of health education programs to increase HIV safe sex practices. Culturally sensitive education strategies targeting MSM are essential. Further research is needed to evaluate the risk and levels of awareness of HIV in the Pacific.

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