Knowledge, attitudes and practices of university students regarding HIV infection in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1999

Philippe Glaziou, Charles Bodet, Thay Loy, Sophann Vonthanak, Sophie El-Kouby, François Flye Sainte-Marie

A survey on knowledge, attitudes and practices was conducted in a representative sample of university students in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 1999. A total number of 772 students from 14 different classrooms randomly selected out of 126 classrooms with proportional probability sampling were surveyed including all students in the selected classrooms, of whom 679 participated in the study (88%) and filled a self-administered questionnaire.

Sex ratio (M/F) was 2.2, mean age 21 years old (males: 22, females: 20) and 23% of the students were living alone. Mean weekly expenditures of the students was US$ 19 [95% confidence interval (CI): 14-24; males: 22, females: 13]. Knowledge of HIV transmission routes and risk factors was excellent, and all students had already received information on HIV on several occasions via lecture presentations and television or newspapers. The students found that condoms were costly (18%), difficult to find (17%), difficult to use (24%) and that they reduced the pleasure during a sexual intercourse (44%).

Of the male students, 44% had experienced a sexual relationship (95% CI: 31-52), mean age at first intercourse was 20 years old. During the first intercourse, 67% of male students used a condom (95% CI: 57-77), 73% if the partner was a prostitute (63% of first sexual partners were prostitutes).

During the last intercourse with a prostitute, 76% of male students used a condom (95% CI: 66-87). Of the male students who had experienced sexual relationships, 8% had experienced a relationship with a man (95% CI: 0.3-16), 27% had no current sexual partner during the survey and 47% had three or more partners. Number of sexual partners was not related to age or to weekly living expenditures. Mean number of relations with prostitutes during the past month was four (95% CI: 2.5-5.6), and 13% of the male students had more than 10 relations with prostitutes. Condom use with prostitutes decreased with age (p < 0.001) and the number of relationships with prostitutes within the past month (p < 0.001) but was not related to the level of weekly expenditures (survey ordered logistic regression). Of the female students, 3% had experienced sexual relations (95% CI: 3.2-4.8). Mean age at first intercourse was 18 years old. During first intercourse, 10% of the female students used a condom. None of the female students had experienced homosexual relationships. In total, 45% of students who had sexual relationships had already been tested for HIV.