The aim of this study was to ascertain:

• Self-administered questionnaire available in Chinese and English.
• Distributed to female parlour based SIWs. There are no male parlour-based SIWs in SLHD.

In line with The NSW HIV Strategy 2012-2015(ii), Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) identifies SIWs as a priority population for HIV and STI prevention(iii). SLHD Sexual Health Service partners with SWOP to provide outreach services to SIWs, including health education and free safe sex packs. However, there was no available data in relation to sexual health services work in conjunction with Sex Workers’ Outreach Project (SWOP) to promote the health and human rights of SIWs.

The NSW Sexually Transmissible Infections Programs Unit recommends that sex workers be screened at least every 3-6 months for Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia and Hepatitis B and yearly for HIV and Syphilis(iv).

In this small study most SIWs were accessing sexual health care. Lack of time was the most commonly reported barrier to screening.

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Background

Sex Industry workers (SIWs) in Australia have low rates of HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Publicly funded sexual health services work in conjunction with Sex Workers’ Outreach Project (SWOP) to promote the health and human rights of SIWs.

In line with The NSW HIV Strategy 2012-2015(ii), Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) identifies SIWs as a priority population for HIV and STI prevention(iii). SLHD Sexual Health Service partners with SWOP to provide outreach services to SIWs, including health education and free safe sex packs. However, there was no available data in relation to sexual health screening of parlour based SIWs in SLHD.

The aim of this study was to ascertain:

(a) The access of parlour based SIWs in SLHD to comprehensive HIV and STI screening.
(b) The potential demand for parlour-based HIV/STI screening services.

Methods

• Self-administered questionnaire available in Chinese and English.
• Distributed to female parlour based SIWs. There are no male parlour-based SIWs in SLHD.

Ethics approval was obtained from SLHD Ethics Review Committee (Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Zone).

Results

• 47 surveys were collected between December 2013 and May 2014.

Demographics: (Table 1):

- The majority of participants were born in China or Australia
- Age range: 19-53 (median 36)

STI Screening History (Tables 2 & 3):

- 77% (n=36) reported having HIV/STI screening in last 6 months.
- The majority (n=52) of participants attended a sexual health clinic for screening.
- 12 out of the 20 Chinese born participants reported having attended a sexual health service.

Barriers to Screening (Figure 1, Table 4):

- 16 participants reported issues that made it difficult to get to the clinic/doctor.
- Half of these identified more than 1 barrier.
- 4 of these participants were born in China and 3 in other Asian countries.

Tests at screening (Table 5):

- Vaginal swabs, blood tests and throat swabs were the most common tests offered at screening.

Additional tests (Table 6):

- 6 (13%) of participants reported that they wanted additional tests offered.
- 1 of these 6 participants filled in a Chinese language survey.

STI Screening at work:

- 35 (74%) participants stated they would use an STI screening service at their place of work.
- 3 declined & 1 unknown filled in Chinese language surveys.
- 1 declined & 1 unknown filled in English language surveys.

In this small study most SIWs were accessing sexual health care. Lack of time was the most commonly reported barrier to screening.

This would be partly addressed by providing parlour based testing, which was supported by most SIWs surveyed. The high rates of recent HIV/STI screening reported in this population are encouraging for the maintenance of low HIV/STI rates among parlour-based SIWs in SLHD.

Conclusion

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to Hanisah Corner who assisted with this poster and to the women who completed the survey.

References:

2. NSW STI Programs Unit, NSW Sexual Health Standard Operating Procedures Manual
3. NSW HIV Strategy 2012-2015. NSW Ministry of Health