

Safer Sex Campaign 2005

Background

After the 20-year history of HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong, sexual transmission is still the commonest route of HIV transmission. As of 3rd quarter 2004, about 80% of reported HIV infected cases in Hong Kong contracted the virus through sexual contact.¹

Safer sex is an effective method to prevent HIV transmission through sexual contact. Proper use of condom also prevents the transmission of other sexually transmitted infections and serves as a contraceptive method. Scientific evidences suggest that consistent and correct use of condom reduce the risk of acquiring HIV. UNAIDS stated that condom use is a critical element in a comprehensive, effective and sustainable approach to HIV prevention and treatment. Experience in Thailand, Africa and other areas suggested that condom promotion programmes could have a significant impact on the pattern of condom use in the community.

Despite the importance and effectiveness of safer sex, only 24% of Hong Kong Chinese population reported consistent condom use.² In those at-risk populations, poor condom usage was also observed. About a quarter of male commercial sex clients do not always use condom when having intercourse with commercial sex workers.³ Similar situation was also observed in local men who have sex with men (MSM). Among anal sex MSM, only half of them consistently used condom with male non-commercial sex partners and the percentage was even lower with male commercial sex partners.⁴ The use of condom was especially poor among young MSM aged 15-24.⁵

Aims and objectives

With the support of the Information Services Department, the Department of Health (DH) organized the Safer Sex Campaign 2005 to promote the practice of safer sex and to remove the taboo on condom in the community. The campaign was targeted at sexually active adult population. The aim of the Safer Sex Campaign 2005 was to promote the practice of safer sex and to desensitise the public on the taboo of condom using social marketing strategy. The objectives were:

- To raise public awareness of safer sex
- To promote social acceptance of safer sex
- To improve the vulnerable groups' access to condom
- To appeal and coordinate community participation

Two messages were brought out:

- Safer sex practice is one of the ways to express passion and care.

- Proper use of condom can prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Campaign programmes

This territory-wide campaign, which involved different populations, aimed to coordinate different efforts on safer sex promotion in the community. It consisted of three core elements:

- media publicity
- condom distribution network
- sex education workshop

To amplify the echo from the community, the following organizations and persons were also invited to involve in the campaign:

- Health care providers: e.g. Hospital Authority, Social Hygiene Clinics
- Non-governmental organisations related to AIDS prevention and sex education: e.g. AIDS Concern, CHOICE, Hong Kong AIDS Foundation, Family Planning Association, Hong Kong Sex Education Association
- Organisations or sectors with access to our targets: e.g. Youth - secondary schools and universities, Sexually active adults - labour unions
- Academia in the field of reproductive health and sex education

Media publicity:



A 30-second TV API was screened on local televisions and bus screens. The API was to promote safer sex and to associate an icon with the message. The theme of API was to encourage the public to protect oneself and his partner from sexually transmitted infections and HIV by using a condom for safer sex. As one of the aims of the campaign was to desensitise the taboo of condom, the API should be suitable for all-day viewing. It was screened around the period of Condom Promotion Month and World AIDS Day 2005 (1 December). Radio programmes of the same theme were produced to tie with the TV API.

Internet adverts/ banners were put on several popular internet chat rooms where people meeting new friends. A new section on safer sex was launched in the AIDS Hotline website www.27802211.com.

Publicity materials were also produced to support the campaign and facilitate supplementary projects organized by Government and/or non-governmental organizations. The message also appeared at bus stops, bus and tram bodies, bus TV, MTR and KCR stations and outside government buildings. Condom guides and community calendars, which listed the safer sex promotion activities in the community during the period, were available to the public in DH clinics.

A kick-off ceremony was held to arouse the public awareness of the importance of safer sex and serve as the premiere of the new API on safer sex.

Sex education workshop



Red Ribbon Centre organised a series of activities to magnify the coverage of the safer sex message. Sex Education Online of RTHK, Hong Kong Professional Teacher's Union and Red Ribbon Centre jointly organised the "Workshop for Sex Education in School - Tackling questions about sex" on 25 September 2005 for teachers and social workers, with the aims to promote a knowledge-based sex education approach in teachers and social workers and equip them with the skills to manage sexual health enquiries and promote safer sex. In this Sex Education Forum, speakers from different professionals including medical, nursing, social welfare, education were invited to share their experience in sex education.

About 400 resource kits were sent to all student unions of universities, for safer sex promotion in university orientation camps. The resource kit included some songs, games and leaflets for the organisers to include safer sex message in their orientation activities.

Condom distribution network:



The objectives of the condom distribution network were:

- To raise public awareness of safer sex
- To improve the accessibility of condom

Although the sales network of condom in Hong Kong has extended to supermarkets and convenient stores, it is embarrassing to buy a condom in front of cashier in the society where sex is still a taboo. To make condom more accessible, a condom distribution network was formed during September 2005. Five settings were invited to participate to placing a condom distribution box in their toilets. Toilet, as a setting with absolute privacy, can serve as an appropriate venue for condom distribution. Public can have free access to condoms in a comfortable way. Condom vending machines were installed in public toilets.

Other settings also joined the condom distribution network:

- Health institutes, i.e. Clinics and hospitals under DH and HA
- Clinics of dermatology and venereology private practitioners
- Universities
- Trade Unions

Public could get a condom from the condom distribution box free of charge.

References

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