

HIV risk perception communication in Hong Kong

MSM: Integrating quantitative and qualitative studies

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Objectives : In Hong Kong, the HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men (MSM) has reached 4%, but what does it mean to local MSM? The study aims to explore the pattern of HIV risk perception communication in Hong Kong MSM.

Methodology: Both quantitative and qualitative studies were conducted. In the quantitative study, 443 MSM recruited from gay venues were interviewed, using a structured questionnaire. For the qualitative part, in-depth interviews with 37 MSM were conducted.

Results :the quantitative study found out that 26% of the respondents perceived themselves to have no chance of contracting HIV and 34.3% perceived a >10% HIV prevalence among local MSM. Yet, no statistically significant association was found between these two HIV risk perceptions (personal susceptibility and overall disease prevalence). This can be supported and explained by the qualitative data. Most respondents thought their chances of infection were low. The pattern of risk perception and communication among MSM was largely based on personal experiences and interactions with peers. The HIV prevalence figure was just a cold number, but became relevant when a personal acquaintance got infected.

Conclusion: An overall HIV prevalence might not translate into personal risk perception. Innovative strategies for risk communication are needed. And peers' influence should be a focus.