

EVIDENCE OF CONSIDERABLE HIV PREVENTION AND CARE NEED AMONG A LARGE SAMPLE OF BISEXUAL MEN: FINDINGS FROM THE 5-COUNTRY ASIA-PACIFIC MSM INTERNET SURVEY

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Background:

Men who have sex with men (MSM) bear a disproportionately high burden of HIV in South-East Asia. Smaller scale studies indicate bisexual men may be especially exposed to HIV risk and to social harm.

Methods:

From May 2020 to January 2021, we conducted an online cross-sectional survey (promoted via social media) of 15,938 MSM across Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan and Vietnam. Chi-square tests were used to examine differences in HIV prevention and care need between those identifying as bisexual versus homosexual/gay.

Results:

In total, 22.3% (n=3,342) of participants identified as bisexual (Thailand=18.0%; Malaysia=19.2%; Indonesia=51.2%; Japan=21.0%; Vietnam=18.1%). Compared to gay men, bisexual men were significantly less likely to have ever taken an HIV test (61.1% gay Vs. 48.1% bisexual, $p<0.01$), less likely to be living with diagnosed HIV (13.6% Vs. 6.5%, $p<0.001$), less likely to have heard of PrEP (65.6% Vs. 48.1%, $p<0.01$) or have used it (12.8% Vs. 9.0%, $p<0.001$). There were no differences regarding condom use with either casual or regular partners. Compared to gay men, bisexual men were more likely to have avoided healthcare services because of a fear that people will learn they have sex with men and were more likely to have been blackmailed because they have sex with men. Bisexual men were considerably less likely than gay-identified men to have disclosed their attraction to men to family or friends.

Conclusion:

Despite a similar profile of HIV risk-related activity, bisexual men were found to have considerably elevated HIV prevention and care needs, with lower levels of HIV

testing and of PrEP awareness and use. Interventions to reduce stigma directed towards all MSM, including those identifying as bisexual, need to be resourced, developed and sustained in community and clinical contexts to improve access to HIV education and biomedical interventions.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None