

RISK FACTORS FOR OROPHARYNGEAL GONORRHOEA AMONG FEMALE SEX WORKERS ATTENDING SEXUAL HEALTH CLINICS IN MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY: A CASE-CONTROL STUDY

Phillips TR^{1,2}, Fairley CK^{1,2}, Maddaford K², McNulty A^{3,4}, Donovan B⁵, McIver R³, Wigan R², Varma R^{3,5}, Guy R⁵, Chow EPF^{1,2,6}

¹ Central Clinical School, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

² Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Alfred Health, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

³ Sydney Sexual Health Centre, Sydney, NSW, Australia

⁴ School of Population Health, University New South Wales, NSW, Australia

⁵ The Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, NSW Australia

⁶ Centre for Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Background: Tongue kissing is a risk factor for oropharyngeal gonorrhoea in men who have sex with men and is commonly reported by female sex workers (FSWs) with their clients. The aim of this study was to determine the risk factors for oropharyngeal gonorrhoea in FSWs.

Methods: A case-control study involving 83 FSWs diagnosed with oropharyngeal gonorrhoea (cases) and 603 FSWs without oropharyngeal gonorrhoea (controls). Participants were recruited at two sexual health clinics in Melbourne and Sydney in November 2018-March 2020. The survey asked basic demographic questions, location of sex work, sex practices with male clients in an average working week and sex with not-at-work male partners in the last week. Nucleic acid amplified test was used for oropharyngeal gonorrhoea diagnosis. Univariable and multivariable logistic regression were performed to examine the factors associated with oropharyngeal gonorrhoea.

Results: The median age of 686 FSWs was 30 (interquartile range [IQR]: 26-36). Most performed sex work exclusively in one type of venue (578; 84.3%), most commonly brothels (352;51.5%) followed by massage parlours (153;22.4%). Almost 40% were newly arrived in Australia (within 3 years). There were 417(60.8%) who tongue kissed clients and 198(28.9%) who performed condomless oral sex on clients in an average working week. There were 251(36.6%) who had not-at-work sexual partners. After adjusting for site of recruitment, age, length of time in Australia, tongue kissing clients, performing condomless oral sex with clients and having a not-at-work sexual partner, only performing condomless oral sex at work was associated with oropharyngeal gonorrhoea (adjusted odds ratio[aOR]: 3.5; 95%CI: 1.8-6.8; p<0.001).

Conclusion: Almost 30% of FSW reported performing condomless oral sex on clients and this practice was associated with oropharyngeal gonorrhoea diagnosis. Tongue kissing with male clients was not associated with oropharyngeal gonorrhoea in FSWs.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

EPFC is supported by an Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant (GNT1172873). CKF is supported by an Australian NHMRC Leadership Investigator Grant (GNT1172900). All other authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.