

## **RISKY BEHAVIOR AND HIV/HCV KNOWLEDGE OF WOMEN COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS (WCSWs) AND INJECTING DRUG USERS (IDUs) IN RAJSHAHI CITY OF BANGLADESH**

Kalam MA

Siam Health Care, Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Introduction:** The rate of co-infection of hepatitis viruses with human immunodeficiency virus, though still controversial, is becoming a growing global health concern, principally because each infection affects the course of the other and increased risk of acquiring the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the hepatitis C virus (HCV) due to prevalent engagement in drug use and sexual behaviors. No research has investigated HIV and HCV knowledge in this high-risk population. We investigated the rate of co-infection of these two viral diseases in Rajshahi city of Bangladesh.

**Methods:** The present study evaluated a sample of adult floating women commercial sex workers and injecting drug users/injectors from Rajshahi city (n = 290) who were recruited from streets & parks. Their hepatitis C status was determined using commercially acquired reagent strips.

**Results:** The sample had low HIV and HCV knowledge but also reported less risk behaviors including 64% engaging in sex work and 80% reporting a history of drug injection. The results of multiple regression analysis for risky sexual behavior indicated that sexual minority women and those with less HIV knowledge were more likely to engage in high-risk sexual behaviors. The regression model identifying the significant correlates of risky drug behavior indicated that HIV knowledge, age, and income were negative correlates and that sexual minority women were more likely to engage in high-risk drug use.

**Conclusion:** Bangladesh must act rapidly and decisively to avert the impending HIV/HCV epidemic or it will be too late. Interventions for women CSWs and IDUs should consider the varied impact of sociodemographic background and prioritize HIV/HCV education to more effectively deter risky sexual and drug behaviors.

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