

INCONSISTENT CONDOM USE FOR FELLATIO AMONG FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN NORTHERN SYDNEY

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Background: Safe sex practices among female sex workers (FSWs) are dynamic with many influences. Northern Sydney Sexual Health Service (NSSHS) provides dedicated clinics and outreach in Chinese and Korean to FSWs in northern Sydney, and to English-speaking FSWs. We describe safe sex practices among FSWs attending our clinic.

Methods: We designed an anonymous questionnaire, translated into Chinese, Thai and Korean. This was administered to FSWs when attending our clinic. Logistic regression determined independent associations with inconsistent condom use for fellatio.

Results: Between August 2017-November 2018, 201 surveys were provided to FSWs; all were self-completed. Chinese women comprised 67%, other Asian 8% and Australasian 12.5%. Of those born overseas, 88% had not engaged in sex work before arrival in Australia and most were sex working for ≤ 12 months. Median age was 35 years (IQR 29-44). Most (69%) worked in parlours; 23% in massage premises. Clients requesting unprotected fellatio was reported by 95% of participants and approximately two-thirds reported feeling pressure to have unprotected vaginal and oral sex. Inconsistent condom use at work was reported by 24% for vaginal sex, and by 74% for fellatio. Statistically significant independent associations with inconsistent condom use for fellatio as adjusted odds ratios (aOR) are: age 30-39 years (aOR:12.5, 95%CI 2.35-66.1, $P=0.003$), age ≥ 40 years (aOR:7.94, 95%CI 1.44-43.6, $P=0.017$), sex working in Australia for ≤ 12 months (aOR:4.17, 95%CI 1.23-14.1, $P=0.022$), more than 15 clients per week (aOR:5.05, 95%CI 1.30-19.7, $P=0.020$), client requesting unprotected fellatio (aOR:1.02, 95%CI 1.00-1.04, $P=0.044$), offered more money for unprotected fellatio (aOR:84.4, 95%CI 7.88-904, $P=0.000$), feeling pressured to have unprotected vaginal sex (aOR:7.29 (95%CI 1.15-46.4, $P=0.035$).

Conclusion: Our study reveals considerably higher frequency of inconsistent condom use for fellatio than has been previously reported locally. Health promotion should focus on helping FSWs develop skills to deal with requests and pressure for unprotected fellatio.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: No funding support was sought or provided for this project.