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Weak gay identity in southern Sri Lanka and its impact on routine HIV testing

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Introduction: Sri Lanka was facing rapidly growing proportion of new HIV cases among MSM over past two years. MSM have weak gay identity and strongly oppose to disclose their identity. They worry about diagnosis of HIV infection. However all of them hesitate to come for screening of HIV due to worrying about disclosing their identity, and because stigma and discrimination among MSM including name calling, violence, bullying. Also sex between men's remaining illegal which prevent access to health and support services and investigations. This study tried to identify the factors which push them for HIV testing and hinder them not to go for testing.

Project activity: From gay.com, MSM national network in Sri Lanka identified sixteen MSM in southern area and survey was carried out asking about their identity, knowledge about HIV/AIDS, attitude for HIV testing, condom use etc. Structured survey and interviews including provision of knowledge on prevention technologies such as risk reduction, condom promotion, counseling and testing etc. were done with this sixteen young gay boys. ELISA testing was carried out as initial screening test. Those who were positive for the screening test were undergone confirmation Western Blot testing.

Result: Life time experience of HIV testing among these MSM and experience of condom use were zero and found less AIDS knowledge, fear of HIV/AIDS. They are very reluctant to come for testing due to social stigma and discrimination. All of them had not thought of testing since they don't know the risk of HIV and their sero status even though they were practicing unsafe sexual practices. Finally four gay boys were found HIV positive among sixteen surveyed.

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