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Research Paper

Prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Infections in Female Sex Workers

Medical Science

KEYWORDS : FEMALE SEX WORKERS(FSWs), SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS(STIs), HIV

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Sexually transmitted infections are becoming a major public health problem in India. This study was undertaken to identify different pattern of STIs, their correlation with age, educational level, marital status, mode of sex and condom usage.

MATERAILS & METHODS: About 202 FSWs from June 2014 to May 2015 were screened in our STD O.P. Clinical examination, serology, wet mount, gram stain, Gonococcus culture taken.

RESULTS: Majority (64.36%) were between 20-29years. 36.14% were living with their husbands, 45.05% were separated/divorced. 45.05% had 6-10 clients per week, 70.3% had knowledge about STD/HIV awareness. 32.18% of FSWs had consistent use of condoms. 57.92% had STIs. 23.08% had mixed infections. The most common STI was bacterial vaginosis(34.65%) , cervicitis(8.42%), trichomoniasis(5.45%), vulvovaginal candidiasis(4.46%). HIV positivity was 5.94%. VDRL reactive in 2.97%. TPHA positivity seen in 10.89%.

CONCLUSION: FSWs play a major role in transmitting STIs. Behaviour change and condom promotion advocated for effective prevention of STIs.

Introduction

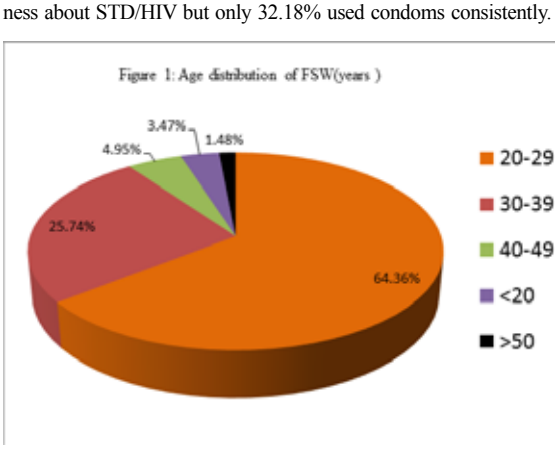
Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are common in developing countries[1] and pose a major health problem in India[2].They are the major contributors to the morbidity and mortality of population, particularly because their presence increases the risk of HIV transmission between 2- and 20-fold[3]. The major mode of HIV transmission reported in India is heterosexual contact (85%),[4] and FSWs constitute a core group for transmission of HIV and other STIs[5]. Hence this study was conducted to assess prevalence of STIs/HIV among FSWs according to various socio-demographic and behavioral factors.

Materials and Methods

About 202 FSWs who attended the STD OPD during the period of June 2014 to May 2015 were included in the study. The study patients were interviewed regarding their age, educational status, marital status, sexual history, the number of clients per workers and their condom use. All the patients were counselled on STD/HIV, genital hygiene, sexual practices, regular treatment, follow up and consent obtained for examination. Clinical examination followed by laboratory investigations comprising serology, wet mount, gram stain, Gonococcal culture were taken and the results were tabulated.

RESULTS

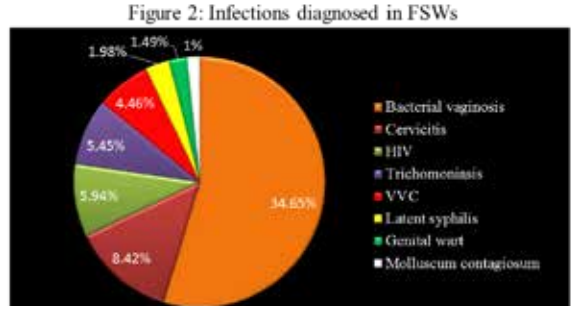
Majority(64.36%) of the FSWs were in the age group of 20-29 years with a mean of 24.4 years (Figure 1). Majority(64.36%) belonged to lower socioeconomic status with education level upto 5th class (45.05%) 45.05% were living separately and 18.81 % were unmarried . 45% had 6-10 clients per week . Many of them were in 2-5 years duration in sex trade (n=81, 40.1%) 70.30% had an awareness about STD/HIV but only 32.18% used condoms consistently.



57.92% of the study group were found to have some STIs out of which 23.08% have mixed infections

The most common STD in this study was bacterial vaginosis (34.65%) followed by cervicitis (8.42%) (Figure.2)

Figure 2: Infections diagnosed in FSWs



Lab Results in the study group (n=202) (Table No.1)

Investigations	No of Positive results	Percentage(%)
Clue cells – Gram stain of vaginal discharge	70	34.65
>30 pus cells- Gram stain of Cervical discharge	17	8.42
Wet mount for TV	11	5.45
KOH for Candida	9	4.46
Tzanck smear	0	0
Gonococci - gram stain & culture	0	0
VDRL	6	2.97
TPHA	22	10.89
VDRL + TPHA	4	1.98
HIV	12	5.94

HIV and VDRL reactivity were observed in 5.94% and 2.97% of subjects respectively. Among the HIV +ve patients 66.67% had mixed infections of which bacterial vaginosis was commonest followed by cervicitis, molluscum contagiosum, anogenital wart.

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Discussion

During the study period, 202 FSWs were studied in detail, out of them 117 (57.92%) FSWs were diagnosed to have STIs. This was higher comparing to the study done in Manipur[6] 2003 in which 32.68% were affected .

The most common age group of FSW at presentation was 20-29years (64.36%). This is similar to a study conducted by Thakor HG[7] et al in 2000 on sex workers of Surat city in which 2/3rd were below the age of 30 years and also comparable with Manipur study where most cases were in the age group of 20 – 30years.

In this study 70.30%FSWs were heard about STDs and HIV and knew that STDs /HIV could be prevented by condom use. But only 32.18% had consistent condom use with the client. This was similar to a survey reported by Majra[8].

45.05% of the FSWs were living separately.40.10% FSWs were in sex trade for 2 – 5yrs duration. 33.17% of FSWs had contact with more than 10 clients per week and 45.05% FSWs had 6 to 10 clients per week.

The most common STI in our study group was bacterial vaginosis (34.65%) which is comparable with a study in Chennai[9] in 2005 in which prevalence of bacterial vaginosis in FSWs was 45% .HIV and VDRL reactivity were observed in 5.94% and 2.97% of subjects respectively which is comparable with a study in Karnataka[10] where it was 5.6% and 3.6% respectively. The most common STD in HIV positive FSW was bacterial vaginosis followed by cervicitis as in seronegatives.

Conclusion

FSWs play a major role in transmitting STIs. Majority are asymptomatic, hence requiring a routine screening for STIs. Behaviour change communication and condom promotion should be advised as they are very effective means for prevention of STIs.

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