

Sexual Practice of Taxi/Truck Drivers and Helpers in the Philippines

Research Paper No. 1998-08



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Abstract

A cross sectional survey among 200 taxi drivers and 100 truck drivers/helpers was conducted late in 1997 to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of taxi drivers and truck drivers/helpers relative to STD/HIV/AIDS in the light of their social and demographic conditions.

Based on a structured questionnaire, the interviewers elicited questions on the socio-demographic profile, knowledge, attitudes and sexual behavior of the respondents. Interviews of transport managers/operators were also conducted to gain additional information on the drivers' lifestyles and the companies' health-related activities. Based on the findings, possible preventive areas for STD/HIV/AIDS prevention in the transport industry was determined.

The survey revealed that almost half of the respondents are in their mid-30s. A large majority of them had heard about STD/HIV/AIDS but, misconceptions on the causative agents and modes of transmission of these diseases still exists among 10% of the respondents.

Forty-five percent of the respondents believe that being intoxicated is one of ways that could tempt them to engage in casual sex. Other ways that could tempt them is when they have watch pornographic films/videos (31%), was teased by friends (29%), by provocative appearance/actions by women they meet (17%), when they have taken prohibited drugs (15.7%) and being far away from home/homesick (2%). Overly friendly lady-riders offering casual sex

was noted by 7 taxi drivers as one of their temptations to engage in casual sex. While about half of the respondents (163 out of 300) admitted having had sex with persons other than their wives or regular partners. Thirty-six percent (59 out of 163) of them had casual sex less than one year ago. For those who engaged in casual sex, only 25% of taxi drivers and 15% of truck drivers/helpers had used condoms.

Respondents were responsive to STD/HIV AIDS prevention measure. Most of them suggested that the best way to protect themselves against STD/HIV/AIDS was to avoid sexual relationship with commercial sex workers (CSWs). They suggested that government should pursue intensive information campaigns and conduct seminars/lectures among drivers to educate them on all aspects of the disease. This need was echoed in interviews and discussions with taxi/truck owners who has not provided any health-related activities to the drivers/helpers. Peer education and reading materials with simple comics-type messages, could be effective tools for educating the workers. Willing to support government's efforts in curbing the spread of the disease, the owners would like the government to focus its efforts on identified "hot spots" frequented by drivers for casual sex encounters.

Overall, the report emphasized the need for ready access of the drivers, helpers as well as operators to accurate information and intensive, continuing education.