



Coalition to Promote Research

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and Fundamental Knowledge Through Scientific Research

Talking Points Regarding Substance Use and HIV Risk among Thai Women

Preventing HIV infection is NIH's highest priority for HIV-related research. This research aims to better understand how to prevent HIV transmission among many different groups of vulnerable populations around the world, since HIV/AIDS is a global epidemic. What occurs in one part of the world can potentially have an impact on the public health in the United States.

Recent disappointing results from recent clinical studies of HIV vaccine and microbicide candidates underscore the need for additional targeted behavioral approaches. Biomedical and behavioral interventions are urgently needed to reach individuals at risk both in the U.S. and in international settings. NIH supports research aimed at better understanding and modifying the social and cultural factors associated with HIV infection, particularly in communities at high risk of acquiring HIV.

The research is easy to ridicule if it is taken out of its public health context. The fact is, we need to explore a range of research avenues in vulnerable populations around the world to learn the best ways to control the transmission of HIV.

Additional Information: The proposed collaboration study between Ms. Usaneya Perngporn, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand and Dr. Nemoto, Public Health Institute, California, will investigate the sociocultural contexts of HIV risk behaviors and drug use among Thai female and male-to-female transgender (kathoey) sex workers in Bangkok. It's described in full at:

http://crisp.cit.nih.gov/crisp/CRISP_LIB.getdoc?textkey=7685204&p_grant_num=1R21DA026324-01A1&p_query=&ticket=94385719&p_audit_session_id=465152143&p_keywords=>.

Background Information on HIV/AIDS prevalence/incidence and this particular study

Globally:

- 33 million people estimated to be currently living with HIV/AIDS • More than 25 million men, women, and children have already died
- In 2007, an estimated 2.7 million new HIV infections occurred
- In 2007, 2.1 million people died from AIDS

Since the early days of the epidemic, NIH has supported research efforts in countries impacted by HIV/AIDS. The development of research infrastructure, including the training of scientists and healthcare providers is an essential component of NIH international research programs.

HIV/AIDS and Sexual Behavior

The toll from illnesses associated with sexual behavior is enormous. The epidemiological bridge for the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections to persons at-risk involves multiple routes, including drug abuse and prostitution. Understanding the risk factors posed by prostitution and illicit drug use remain critical to controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States and worldwide. The transgender community---which certainly exists in the U.S.--- is complex, and has been understudied. It is urgent we understand more about social behaviors and HIV risk for all populations, including transgender individuals.

Advances in HIV prevention can be of great benefit to individuals worldwide, especially given the mobile nature of people in this day and age contributing to the spread of communicable diseases. Research is currently needed to develop and adapt HIV prevention models that take into account sociocultural factors so that the further transmission of HIV and sexually transmitted infections can be averted. Participation in these types of studies also can provide a way for persons suffering from the health consequences of illicit sexual activity to receive treatment while contributing to our knowledge of prevention and treatment outcomes in these populations.