Sustained changes in sexual behavior by female sex workers after completion of a randomized HIV prevention trial.

Abstract

INTRODUCTION:

Behavioral interventions in female sex workers (FSWs) are associated with changes in sexual behavior and reduced rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. We examined the sustainability of such interventions.

METHODS:

HIV-uninfected Kenyan FSWs were enrolled in a clinical trial that provided free male condoms, community and clinic-based counseling, and STI management. After trial completion, scaled-back community-based resources remained in place. More than a year later, women were invited to complete a follow-up behavioral questionnaire and to undergo STI/HIV counseling and testing. Individual changes in sexual behavior were assessed by paired analysis.

RESULTS:

One hundred seventy-two women participated in the resurvey 1.2 years after trial termination. Client numbers had risen (paired t test, \( P < 0.001 \)), but condom use had also increased (\( P < 0.001 \)); both remained substantially lower than at enrollment. Regular partners accounted for a greater proportion of unprotected FSW sexual encounters (35% vs. 10%; \( P < 0.001 \)). Only 9 (5.2%) of 172 women had a conventional STI, and the follow-up HIV incidence of 1.6 per 100 person-years (PYs) was similar to that during the trial period (3.7 per 100 PYs). Incident STIs and HIV were associated with the frequency of unprotected sex and younger age.

CONCLUSIONS:

Less intensive community-based risk reduction services after clinical trial termination may support ongoing reductions in STIs and HIV among high-risk FSWs.