

Context and Correlates of Health Behaviors in South India

PI: Maria L. Ekstrand PhD

Co-Is: N. Kumarasamy MD, Davidson Solomon MD, Gopalkrishnan MD, Wayne Steward PhD

Project Staff: AK Srikrishnan, AK Ganesh, Thomas Osmand MPH, Sethu Lakshmi, CK Vasudevan, Daniela Rodriguez, Elsa Heylen, Jason Barry, Raja Solomon, Kathryn Steuerman, Sibi Sreekumar, KR Hariandran, Indirani Gopi, Ansamma George, Rashmi Raman, K Asish, Srinivasa Rao, K Mallikamba

Consultants: Ron Stall PhD, B.M. Tripathi MD, Sakuntala Suresh MD

Project Description

This five-year study is being conducted in collaboration with three Indian NGOs: YRGCARE in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, SHADOWS in Chirala, Andhra Pradesh, and Shelter in Calicut, Kerala. The overall goal is to obtain a better understanding of HIV risk-taking in the context of alcohol consumption among male migrant workers and female sex workers in South India through formative work as well as qualitative and quantitative interviews. A secondary goal of this project is to develop and pilot-test a risk reduction intervention among these two groups.

Specific objectives include:

- Conduct qualitative interviews with our target populations to examine patterns of alcohol consumption and sexual risk-taking, and the relationship between these behaviors and individual, interpersonal and contextual factors.
- Develop and administer a quantitative survey to measure the prevalence and patterns of sexual risk-taking and alcohol consumption, as well as related individual interpersonal and contextual factors in the two target populations.
- Develop, implement and pilot test a risk-reduction intervention to reduce HIV risk-taking in the context of alcohol use among South Indian female sex workers and male migrant workers.
- Develop research capacity in two NGOs serving vulnerable populations in these areas, using a previously successful scale-up model in collaboration with YRGCARE, Chennai.

Significance

Although alcohol use is an important factor in both HIV transmission and disease progression in developed countries, little is known about these relationships in the developing world, including India. Previous studies suggest that alcohol consumption is not prevalent in the general Indian population, but that it is common in subgroups of individuals who are also at high risk for HIV. Preliminary data from slum areas in Delhi suggest that these groups drink to cope with mental distress and loneliness, to enhance sexual pleasure and performance, and that their alcohol use may be related to HIV risk-taking. Data are currently limited on specific alcohol use patterns in these groups, how these patterns serve as a context for sexual risk-taking, and how these behaviors are influenced by individual, interpersonal, contextual and other cultural factors. Such information is crucial for developing effective, targeted risk reduction programs.

Project End Date: May 2012

