
FORMATIVE RESEARCH TO ASSESS HIV RISK AMONG MSM IN NEPAL

PI: Erin Wilson, DrPH, MPH

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This study aims to meet the need for in-depth formative research to develop an evidence-based and theory-driven HIV prevention intervention with MSM in Nepal. The study will be conducted in collaboration with the Blue Diamond Society, the only CBO currently serving MSM in Nepal.

We will conduct five interviews with key informants who are service providers knowledgeable about HIV risk among MSM, to identify sub-populations of MSM, gather initial HIV risk data, assist in the refinement of an interview guide for MSM and assess feasibility of a larger study. Based on this data, we will conduct in-depth interviews with 20 MSM to explore identity, sexual networks, risk perception and stigma. Finally, we will conduct interviews with five key informants who are leaders in HIV prevention among MSM in Nepal and South Asia. These last interviews will help the research team develop relationships with leaders in South Asian MSM HIV prevention and assess feasibility for a larger study. We will engage community members at the beginning and end of this study for their input and engagement as potential community advisory board members in a future study.

SIGNIFICANCE

Despite the risk for a generalized epidemic, HIV research in Nepal has been limited. Emerging research in Asia has documented a rapid rise of HIV among formerly unaffected MSM. Although data are scarce, one behavioral surveillance conducted in 2001 found that 4% of MSM and 5% of male sex workers surveyed in Kathmandu were HIV+. This number is extraordinarily high compared to the overall prevalence of HIV in Nepal of .55%. In Nepal, sexual minorities are highly stigmatized and research and services geared to MSM are limited. There is a critical need for in-depth research to inform the development of an HIV prevention intervention with MSM in Nepal in order to curb the spread of the epidemic and protect this vulnerable population and their sex partners.

PROJECT END DATE: December 2008