

### 3. SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

#### Completed studies:

#### Understanding of gender differences in sex and sexuality among HIV positives – A study from Chennai, India

#### Background:

In the context of social development in the era of HIV/AIDS, a social and cultural understanding of gender particularly in the domain of sexuality is very important. This has a powerful influence on human behaviour.

#### Aim:

- To understand sexual behaviour patterns among HIV positive men and women

#### Methods:

This was a descriptive study on 203 seropositive men and women who attended the TRC out patient clinic and STD clinic in Government Hospital. A semi structured interview schedule was used to elicit data.

#### Results:

More men than women reported to having had premarital and extra marital relationships, most often with a commercial sex worker or a friend, and usually under the influence of alcohol. Fifty three percent of the women described the sexual relationship with their spouse as 'bad' compared to 23% of the men ( $p < 0.001$ ). Many women who refused sex said that their spouses reacted violently to their refusal. More than one-third of the women and 5% of the men were aware that their spouses were having extra marital relationship ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Key message:** It is important to address sexual behaviour among HIV positive women and men. Focused interventions are needed to help men and women be aware of risky sexual behaviour and indulge in safe, healthy, satisfying sexual behaviour.

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## **Ongoing studies:**

### **Behavioral risk factors and HIV sero-prevalence among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Chennai**

#### **Background:**

In India, the most typical route of transmission is through unprotected sexual intercourse. Men having sex with men (MSM) are a particularly high-risk group. It is estimated that many men engage in high-risk same-sex sexual behaviors. MSM are an “invisible” population in India and there is tremendous cultural pressure for MSM to get married and have children. This can place both the MSM themselves at risk as well as their wives and possibly their (unborn) children. They are therefore referred to as a bridge population. Despite the public health need, research on HIV prevalence and behavioral risk factors among MSM in India is negligible. The findings of this study will help to develop and test interventions for MSM.

#### **Aim:**

- To obtain correlates and frequency of HIV risk among MSM in Chennai and to estimate the prevalence of HIV in a sample of high risk MSM

#### **Methods:**

It is planned to recruit 200 MSM for the study. The study is in progress.

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### **Longitudinal study of the quality of life among patients on antiretroviral treatment**

#### **Background:**

The quality of life (QOL) has emerged as a significant outcome in management of HIV/AIDS. QOL takes into account those dimensions directly affected by the disease and these include sociological, psychological, environmental and physical dimensions. Currently TRC is conducting a study to evaluate the safety and efficacy of two different ART regimens along with ATT in patients with HIV/TB co-infection.

**Aim:**

- To assess the QOL of all TB patients enrolled into the ART trial being conducted at TRC

**Methods:**

The QOL is being assessed at baseline, one year and two year time points. The WHO - BREF scale for QOL was used to assess the patients. So far, 35 patients have been enrolled and assessed for QOL. The study is ongoing.

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