

TRAINING NEEDS OF MEDICAL DOCTORS TO IMPROVE HIV PREVENTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR MSM IN KYIV, UKRAINE

ISSUES

AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW), a Dutch, non-governmental, public health organisation operating in EECA, began an HIV prevention project among MSM in Kyiv in 2005 jointly with a Ukrainian NGO 'Gay Alliance'. One of the project's objectives is to create a network of health care providers that will ensure the availability of non-judgemental, MSM-friendly medical services.

DESCRIPTION

To assess attitudes towards MSM, knowledge about HIV, training needs and barriers to providing appropriate care, *AFEW* and the Social Expertise Centre (Kyiv) conducted a small-scale survey among medical doctors in October 2005. Forty-five doctors took part in the survey of which 15 were STI doctors, 15 were general practitioners and 15 were urologists. There were 18 female and 27 male respondents and the average age was 40.5 (age range: 25–67). The average duration of respondents' medical practice was 15 years.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Nine (20% of respondents) doctors expressed completely negative attitudes towards MSM and four (8.8%) considered homosexuality to be a pathogen or perversion. These results suggest that it is important to increase knowledge about human sexuality among doctors.
- Six (13.3%) professionals said they believe that MSM do not visit medical institutions because of self-stigma.
- Seven doctors (15.5%) reported that they believed MSM have sexual contact with multiple partners and that is what leads them to increased exposure to HIV.
- While doctors appear to have sufficient knowledge about HIV transmission, some myths still exist.
- The Ukrainian doctors surveyed had little-to-no knowledge about the latest approaches and practices in providing HIV counselling services to MSM patients.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A pilot training curriculum for healthcare providers has been designed by *AFEW* partners to address these negative attitudes and to improve access to and quality of medical services for MSM. Additional work is needed among MSM clients to empower them and dispel stigma and discrimination.

PROJECT

Men who have sex with men: HIV/STI prevention and support project in Ukraine.

OVERALL GOAL

To prevent and reduce the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as break barriers to sexual choice and to available diagnostic, care and support services for MSM in Kyiv/Ukraine.

MAIN SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To establish and sustain a local, community-based support system for MSM in Kyiv and to increase access of MSM to adequate diagnostic, care and support services, as well as prevention means (including condoms and lubricants).
- To empower, educate and equip MSM in Kyiv on HIV/AIDS/STIs and related issues with the aim to increase their capacity to assess risky behaviours and choose safer sexual options.
- To facilitate a dialogue and improve communication and collaboration between local gatekeepers (owners of local gay bars and clubs), NGOs and the government.

DONORS

1. European Commission, EC;
2. Swedish International Development and Co-operation Agency, SIDA;
3. Elton John AIDS Foundation, EJAF.

AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW)

- Dutch
- Non-governmental
- Humanitarian
- Public health organisation
- Focus on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA)

AFEW's mission is to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS by:

- Taking an innovative and proactive approach;
- Targeting the younger generation;
- Co-operating closely with existing governmental structures and NGOs;
- Strengthening East-West engagement.



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