

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF FOREIGN BACKPACKERS IN THE KHAO SAN ROAD AREA, BANGKOK

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Abstract. Travelers play a role in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV because of having unprotected sex. We studied the incidence of casual sex among foreign backpack tourists in the Khao San Road area of Bangkok, Thailand. We also evaluated their attitudes about sexual health and their actual practices. A cross sectional study was conducted using a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire. The target population was backpackers aged ≥ 18 years, from Europe, North America and Australia. In total, 415 questionnaires were filled out and analyzed. Sixty-four percent of participants were male, the overall median age was 27 years and the mean duration of stay was 14.6 days. One hundred seven respondents (25%) had casual sex while staying in Thailand; of these, 55% always used condoms. The selection of sex partner influenced the use of condoms. The highest rate of condom use was among backpackers who had sex with sex workers (63%), while those who had sex with their travel partners had the lowest rate of condom use (35.6%). One-fourth of backpackers in our study had casual sex during their trip. Their attitudes towards safe sex practices were not ideal. Methods to change attitudes and behavior about unprotected sex need to be explored in this population.

Keywords: backpackers, sexual behavior, Thailand

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