CHARACTERISTICS OF SEX PARTNERS AND SEXUAL PARTNERSHIP CORRELATES OF INCONSISTENT CONDOM USE AMONG MALE INJECTION DRUG USERS IN INDIA

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Abstract. Previous studies have established the risky behaviors of IDUs in India, and that IDUs are sexually active; however, there is a need to better understand the nature of sexual partnerships of IDUs. A total of 783 (Delhi) and 766 (Imphal) male IDUs were recruited into the study through respondent-driven sampling. We examined characteristics of sex partners of male IDUs and individual and sexual partnership characteristics associated with unprotected sex in Delhi and Imphal. While 16.8% of sexual partnerships in Delhi were male-to-male, there were almost no male-to-male partnerships in Imphal. The majority of partners of male IDUs in Delhi (82.5%) and Imphal (92.3%) do not inject drugs, with the exception of male partners of male IDUs in Delhi. Commercial partners (females: 58.3%; males: 71.3%) were the most common type of sex partners of male IDUs in Delhi, while regular partners (65.2%) were the most common type of sex partners in Imphal. In Delhi, characteristics of sex partners significantly associated with unprotected sex were being male/transgender (AOR 2.2; 95% CI: 1.2-4.0), being a regular (AOR 5.1; 95% CI: 2.8-9.4) or non-regular partner (AOR 2.7; 95% CI: 1.7-4.5), and sharing needles/syringes with the index IDU (AOR 2.8; 95% CI: 1.4-5.3). In Imphal, partner characteristics associated with unprotected sex were being a regular (AOR 10.1; 95% CI: 4.1-25.1) or non-regular partner (AOR 3.4; 95% CI: 1.5-7.6), and living outside of town or state (AOR 3.3; 95% CI: 1.2-9.6). Enhanced understanding of disassortative sexual mixing and context of unprotected sex within sexual partnerships may enhance sexual risk reduction interventions for IDUs.

Keywords: injection drug users, sex partners, sexual mixing, India