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3rd International Conference on
Epidemiology & Public Health

August 04-06, 2015   Valencia, Spain

Exploring the association between sexual risk behavior and social support in a population representative epidemiological study of Chinese adults in Guangzhou, China

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Background: Sexual risk behavior is highly sensitive and intimate within the Chinese cultural context, and is mainly assessed among high risk population, e.g. female sex worker (FSW), men who have sex with men (MSM) and rural-to-urban migrants. Megacities like Guangzhou have undergone evidently changes of population structure with increasing numbers of high-risk groups lacking social support. The importance of social support on sexual risk behavior is unclear. The current study, therefore, aims at investigating the association between sexual risk behavior and social support among Chinese adults.

Method: Data was obtained from 765 Chinese adults aged 18-59 years using stratified random sampling by utilizing spatial epidemiological methods. Face-to-face interviews were conducted following randomization by building (nearest geographic coordinate) and floor levels, with participant selection based on lowest birthday method. Interviews were conducted in participants' homes with a self-report questionnaire. Participants reported whether they had multiple sex partners or unprotected sexual behavior in the past month, respectively. Social support was measured by the Social Support Rating Scale scored 66 in total with 3 dimensions, namely subjective support, objective support and the utilization of support. Association between sexual risk behavior and social support was analyzed by univariate analysis followed by multivariate logistic regression analysis to adjust for possible confounding factors.

Results: The prevalence of multiple sexual partners and unprotected sexual behavior was 18.25% and 52.51%, respectively. The average social support score was (38.08±8.20), subjective support score, objective support score and the utilization of support score were (21.41±5.78), (9.31±2.95) and (7.28±2.11). Those with lower score of subjective support were more likely to having multiple sexual partners (OR=0.901, [95%CI=0.847, 0.958]). Those with lower score of utilization of support were more likely to having unprotected sexual behavior (OR=0.844, [95%CI= 0.740, 0.962]).

Conclusion: Evidence from this population-level survey indicates high exposure to sexual risk behavior and low social support in Guangzhou, whilst social support that is protective against sexual risk behavior. The role of social networks should be explored as potentially useful for community-based intervention development, especially among population with sexual risk behavior.

Biography

Fangjing Zhou is a postgraduate of Faculty of Medical Statistics and Epidemiology, School of Public Health, Sun Yat-sen University. She is an Assistant of Sun Yat-sen Center for Migrant Health Policy (CMHP), a multidisciplinary center on migrant health, which aims to pioneer knowledge on health of an important population with implications for national health policies and goals. The research teams of CMHP concentrate on primary health care, disease burden, mental health, sexual and reproductive health of migrants and so on. Her research direction is sexual health of migrants, focusing on sexual risk behavior and sexually transmitted disease. She has participated in related researches and a paper has been in peer review.

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Epidemiology (Sunnyvale) 2015
ISSN: 2161-1165, ECR an open access journal

Epidemiology-2015
August 04-06, 2015

volume 5 Issue 3

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