

Working with Sex Workers

reported by Dr. Y. P. Fung

Date:	6 September, 2000
Venue:	Yaumatei Skin Center
Speaker:	Ms. M. K. Y. Wong
Organizer:	Social Hygiene Service, DH

In this meeting, the speaker shared with the audience the development and work of the Anti-Venereal Disease Office (AVDO) at the Social Hygiene Service. She also emphasized the importance of being non-judgmental and non-discriminating when caring for commercial sex workers (CSWs).

The development of AVDO is summarized in Table 1.

In the Social Hygiene Service, in order to encourage attendance and compliance, CSWs are granted "special register service". This service offers consultation and treatment that are free of charge; require no referral; require no prior appointment; are entirely voluntary; are strictly confidential, and provide both clinical and sexual health advice.

Apart from this, separate rooms are also available for interviews for the sex worker. At regular routine check, some or all of the following screening investigations are performed, including: VDRL, HIV-Ab, urethral and cervical smears and cultures, test for chlamydia-trachomatis, high vaginal swab, PAP smear and chest X-ray. Individual counseling advises CSWs to increase their self-protection in risky behaviour, remind them of the importance of regular checks and provide information on resources available.

Commercial sex workers attending Social Hygiene Service are of different nationalities. They include Hong Kong Chinese, Chinese, Thai, Filipino and Europeans. They may be classified according to their work location as follows:

Classification of sex workers and their characteristics

CSW in apartment

They provide sex workers on site, through linkage

Table 1. The development of AVDO

Year	Development
1879	Legalization of prostitution
1879-1906	Booming of CSW in Western District, HK
1928	First venereal disease clinic in Government Civil Hospital
1928	Health visitors & social hygiene visitors working in venereal disease clinic
1935	Prohibition of prostitution
1950	An ordinance to control the spreading of VD. VD must be reported to the health authority by medical practitioners for proper management
1960	VDs were no longer notifiable by law

with "Mafu" to escort CSWs for providing sex services. The manager in the apartment also calls in sex workers for the clients. Condom is usually provided in the apartment.

CSW in brothel/one woman brothel

One or more than one girl per site in this type. Majorities of these CSWs are local Chinese and some are Thai people. Most of the vaginal sex involves condom use. Some Thai CSWs provide oral sex with no condom used.

Streetwalker

Streetwalker offer to provide sexual services to potential clients at nearby villa. The clients are often of lower social class and some are retired elderly. Most of the streetwalkers are housewives or Thai with travel document of older age. Condom is less frequently used.

CSW in finger presser/sauna

They provide sex service on site and they provide masturbation and oral sex.

CSW in karaoke night club/dancing hall

Some of the CSW provide sex service within the premise. Some do not provide sex services on-site, the customers pick up girls out to have sex.

Regular contact CSW

These group of CSWs work as part-time sex worker.

Call girl

Call girls are usually younger age and arranged by agent.

CSW in bar

Majorities of them are Thai and Filipino. They do not provide sex service on-site, the customers pick up girls out to have sex.

The attendance of sex workers at Social Hygiene Clinic from 1996 to 1999 are listed in Table 2.

Outreach to sex workers

One of the most important duties of the AVDO is to reach out to sex workers. Sources of working places can be checked by newspaper advertisement and from established index clients. Health visits are carried out within normal hours, during the evening shift and also at night time. Usually a letter of notification is sent or prior arrangement is made beforehand. Such visits allow the health workers from AVDO to familiarize with the actual working environment of CSWs. It provides an opportunity for introducing themselves and the service to the CSWs and for tracing of defaulter and contact. Health education can also be given on site. Despite these efforts, CSWs on working places often refuse the service.

Other organizations that also contribute towards the health of CSWs include Action for Reach Out, µµ Åö, and Red Ribbon.

Table 2. Attendance of sex workers at Social Hygiene Clinic from 1996 to 1999

Year	Sex worker attendances			Total attendances (New, old, revisit)
	New	Old	Total	
1996	398	776	1174	5174
1997	383	775	1158	5167
1998	567	867	1434	5761
1999	540	957	1497	5732

Learning points:

It is very important to be non-judgmental and non-discriminating when caring for commercial sex workers.