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### Abstract

#### CDC0105 - Is the role of migrancy in determining HIV risk changing over time in sub-Saharan Africa?

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**Background:** Numerous epidemiological studies in sub-Saharan African countries have suggested that migration is a risk factor for HIV infection and high levels of risky sexual behaviour. However, the relationship between migrancy and HIV risk is not immutable and may change over time as the epidemic spreads and responses to it develop.

**Methods:** A random sample of 1000 households from eight rural villages in South Africa resulted in a sample of approximately 2000 unmarried males and females aged 14-25 years. Individuals were eligible for inclusion in the study if they were listed on the household roster, which included individuals who spent long periods of time away from home who were classified as temporary migrants. Data were collected on migrancy status, HIV awareness and sexual behaviour. HIV status was assessed on the basis of an oral fluid sample.

**Results:** Response rates were significantly higher among non-migrants (85%) than among migrants (40%). Among those interviewed, 14% of males and 11% of females were temporary migrants from the rural home. Temporary migrants of both sexes reported higher levels of HIV awareness, and female migrants reported higher levels of condom use (adjusted Odds Ratio 0.61, 95% CI 0.38-0.97). Migrancy status was not associated with other risky sexual behaviour characteristics or prevalent HIV infection.

**Conclusions:** The role of migrancy in determining HIV risk may change as epidemics develop. As the public health response to HIV grows in urban areas, individuals who migrate away from rural areas that are poorly served by HIV prevention programmes may gain higher levels of HIV awareness and be more likely to take on safe sexual behaviour practices. Those who remain in rural areas, particularly those who remain unemployed and out of school, may be those at greatest risk of new infection. Nevertheless, there are methodological challenges to conducting epidemiological studies on migrants.