

Abstract

MOPE0676 - The economics of STI provision in scaling-up HIV prevention among high risk populations in Karnataka, India

L. Kumaranayake¹, S. Chandrashekar², R. Washington³, M. Alary⁴

¹London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine/ Dalhousie University, Economics, Halifax, Canada, ²London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Consultant, Bangalore, India, ³KHPT and St. Johns Medical College, IPHCR, Bangalore, India, ⁴Centre hospitalier affilié universitaire de Québec, Unité de recherche en santé des populations, Quebec, Canada

Background: Untreated curable sexually transmitted infections (STI) impose economic burdens due to ill-health and are associated with increased risk of HIV transmission. To-date there is little information on the costs of providing services, particularly to highly vulnerable populations. The India AIDS Initiative (Avahan) project is currently involved in rapid scale up of HIV prevention in India high-risk populations and increased access to STI treatment is a key activity. This study presents an analysis of the costs of STI services, within the Avahan project, in 12 districts in the Southern Indian state of Karnataka. STI treatment was provided syndromically and, in 8 districts, periodic presumptive treatment (PPT) was available for the management of STI among female sex workers.

Methods: Incremental costs of STI provision were estimated, including drug and provider inputs. Financial and economic costs of implementing activities were retrospectively and prospectively collected from a provider perspective. Ingredients and step-down allocation processes were used to measure and allocate costs. Outcomes were measured using routinely collected project data. Costs are in US\$ 2004.

Results: Of more than 20,000 sex workers in contact with the project, 7625 accessed STI services. 95% of whom were female and 66% of whom displayed symptoms. Costs of STI provision ranged from \$4,101-\$23,840 per district and varied by delivery model (programme linked clinic or referral to private or government provider) and scale of activity. Drug costs ranged from 2% - 56% of STI costs reflecting the intensity of STI treatment being undertaken. The district average cost per person treated was \$27, and there was a 6-fold reduction in average costs as the scale of STI treatment increased to more than 1400 patients per district. STI costs represented 10%-27% of overall Avahan project costs by district.

Conclusions: Significant economies of scale are observed in STI treatment costs as services are expanded.