GENDER AND HIV IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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Research report submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Johannesburg, 2009

DECLARATION

I, Mohammed Abdosh Ali, declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

Signature of Candidate: _____

2nd day of April 2009

ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To explore gender-related differentials of HIV prevalence in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

METHODS: This is a cross-sectional study, data collected by the Rural AIDS and Development Action Research (RADAR) Program for the purpose of a controlled community trial in Limpopo Province. The study population consisted of 798 young men and 992 young women aged 14 to 25 years old. Subjects were tested for the presence of HIV antibodies and answered structured questionnaires. Logistic regression was used to examine risk factors related to gender differentials of HIV prevalence.

RESULTS: The prevalence of HIV infection was 5.8% in men and 12.4% in women. Women often had older partners, while men had much younger partners or partners of a similar age. Men with primary education and reporting as students showed a reduced risk of HIV infection whereas unemployed women showed an increased risk of HIV infection. Sexual debut at the age of ≤ 16 was associated with increased risk of HIV infection among both sexes. A significantly higher HIV prevalence was found in women with more than four lifetime sexual partners, young women having an age difference of three to 9.9 years from their sexual partners, women having non-spousal sexual partners of 22 to 26 years of age, and women reporting no regular financial support. Frequency of sex of six to 20 times was a marker of increased risk of HIV among men.

CONCLUSIONS: The risk of HIV infection was higher in young women than in men. The increased risk of HIV infection in women might be explained by social and behavioural factors that lead young women to select older partners, and is perhaps also a result of the biological susceptibility of women to HIV infection.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Thanks to the Rural AIDS and Development Action Research Program of the School of Public Health, University of Witwatersrand, as well as to the Small Enterprise Foundation for making this data available for use for scientific rigour of work. Thanks to the Anglo American/De Beer Chairman's Education Trust, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Financial Women's Association of New York and the Enterprise Development Innovation Fund of the UK Department for International Development for their core support of this project. Also, thanks to Orasure Technologies Incorporated, Omnimed and Organon Teknika for their donation of Orasure collection devices and Vironostica Uniform HIV 11+ o kits for use in this study. Finally, I extend my gratitude to everyone on the team of the Rural AIDS and Development Action Research Programme who were involved in the process of developing and collecting the data, and especially to my supervisor, James Hargreaves, for his valuable time and guidance.

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AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ARV	Antiretroviral
CI	Confidence Interval
CVL	Cervicovaginal Lavage
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
ELISA	Enzyme-linked Immuno Sorbent Assay
GUD	Genital Ulcer Disease
HIV	Human Immuno deficiency Virus
HPV	Human Papilloma Virus
HSV-2	Herpes Simplex Virus type 2
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IQR	Interquartile Range
OMT	Oral Mucosal Transudate
OR	Odds Ratio
RADAR	Rural Aids and Development Action Research
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SES	Socio-economic Status
STIs	Sexual Transmitted Infections
UNAID	United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS
WHO	World Health Organization