

# Evaluate the Effect of HIV/STDs Structural-level Intervention on Reducing Risky Behaviors in Gay Bathhouses

Abstract:

**Backgrounds:** Gay bathhouses have been identified as public venues where MSM are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors and have been the targets of public venues for the transmission of HIV and STIs among MSM.

**Study Aims:** This study aimed to 1) compare the differences in HIV, syphilis, and gonorrhoea infections, and 2) compare the differences in unprotected sexual behaviors and condom uses during oral and anal sex among gay bathhouse attendees between intervention gay bathhouse and non-intervention bathhouses.

**Methods:** An interventional study was conducted at eight gay bathhouses, including 3 intervention gay bathhouses, and five bathhouses for control. The structural intervention named as “got condoms; use condoms”, including 1) providing free condoms and lubricants to bathhouse owners; 2) providing free condoms and lubricants to attendees at registration; 3) reminding attendees can request additional condoms if needed; 4) distribution safer sex information and posters; and 5) post the new policy of AIDS Prevention Act.

**Results:** As the end of October, a total of 118 gay bathhouse attendees were enrolled. The preliminary findings indicated that seroprevalence rates of anti-HIV-1 antibody and syphilis detected by RPR ( $\geq 1:8$ ), were 5.6% (6/107) and 7.8% (8/102), respectively. One out of 87 urine specimens (1.1%) was PCR-positive for N gonorrhoeae. Of the 76 throat swabs and 53 anal swab collected, none were positive for N gonorrhoeae. Study showed that participants at the structural intervention bathhouses compared to those without intervention has lower rate of HIV infection (4.9% vs. 6.5%), more likely to bring condoms to bathhouses (57% vs. 37.5%), and more likely to insist to use condom during anal sex (75.8% vs. 60.5%).

**Conclusion:** The study findings indicated feasibility of conducting the structural intervention in gay bathhouses and the effectiveness of the intervention were shown in reducing HIV new infections and risky behaviors.

**Keywords:** structural intervention, STD/HIV prevention, and gay bathhouse