Introduction

- Female sex workers (FSW) bear a substantial burden of the HIV epidemic in South Africa, with prevalence estimated to be as high as 70% in some areas.
- Estimates suggest 20% of the 350,000 annual HIV infections in South Africa are among persons connected with sex work.
- Antiretroviral-based pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is effective in preventing HIV infection, and is increasingly being implemented in many contexts (including South Africa among female sex workers).
- This study uses a framed discrete choice experiment (DCE) to explore how the introduction of new products could change incentives for risk in sex work, and whether condom use may be valued differently after the introduction of new biomedical prevention products.
- Data are gathered from a respondent driven sample of 122 active female sex workers from Ekurhuleni Municipality, Gauteng.

Methods

- Participants were asked to complete a client DCE twice – firstly with no framing, and secondly with a framing of a choice under full HIV protection (Figure 2).
- Analysis compared DCE results via multinomial logit and random parameter logit discrete choice models.
- The DCE was developed through four focus group discussions, input from sex workers and a FSW community advisory committee, a literature review, and extensive piloting.

Results

- Price is not currently important to FSW choice, however, there is evidence suggesting price will become an important factor after the introduction of new HIV prevention products (Figure 3).
- There is indicative evidence that condoms will be valued less when new products are used.

Conclusions

- This is the first study to explore how incentives in sex work may be shaped by the introduction of new HIV prevention products.
- Understanding pressures on FSWs to provide unprotected sex after the introduction of new HIV prevention products will be important to ensuring the success of these programmes.
- Programmes introducing new HIV prevention products should monitor their impact on protected and unprotected acts, alongside the prices paid for commercial sex.
- DCEs offer an alternative and theoretically robust means of eliciting sensitive information from respondents in survey interviews.

References

1. Department of Global Health and Development, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, United Kingdom.
2. Wits RHI, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.
3. School of Social and Community Medicine, University of Bristol, Bristol, United Kingdom.

Figure 1: Discrete Choice Experiment Task

Figure 2: Study Design – Repeated DCE with framing

Figure 3: Hypothesised impact of PrEP on supply of unprotected sex

Figure 4: Random parameter logit – main effects

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