To Use or Not to Use: Exploring the Determinants of Consistent Condom Use Among Female Sex Workers in Cameroon

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BACKGROUND
Female sex workers (FSWs) face a high risk of STD and HIV infection. Program interventions targeting this population should focus on consistent condom use regardless of partner type. ACMS conducted a baseline cross-sectional survey in October 2009 to analyze the determinants of consistent condom use in order to inform an HIV and STD prevention program among FSWs in Cameroon.

METHODS
A total of 385 FSWs were selected in the sample. Participants were recruited from bars, nightclubs, walkways, truck stations and brothels using the time location sampling technique. Interviews were conducted between 6:00p.m and 11:00p.m. Opportunity, ability and motivation to use condoms were assessed using multi-item scales measured on a four point Likert scale (ranging from 1 for totally disagree to 4 for totally agree). The questionnaire was designed to explore 16 factors that could be associated with consistent condom use. Multiple logistic regression models were used to assess association between consistent condom use and these factors.

RESULTS
• Only 52.2% reported consistent condom use with non-spousal partners during the last three months and about 70% reported consistent condom use with clients.
• Inconsistent condom users were more likely to agree that they are often pressured by partners to have sex without condom.
• Consistent condom users were more likely to agree that they are able to convince their partners to use condoms; discuss condoms with partners; and insist on a condom being used during sex.
• Consistent condom users were more likely to agree that they assist their partners in using condoms during sex.
• Inconsistent condom users were more likely to disagree that only God can protect them against HIV and unwanted pregnancies, that they need someone to give them a condom before they use it, and that it is the sexual partner who should decide if a condom is to be used during sex.

This study contributes to the first evidence-based program for FSWs in Cameroon that addresses behavioral determinants of condom use. The findings suggest that a behavioral intervention should be implemented for FSWs using multiple strategies, like community discussion and peer-education, to teach how best to assist clients in using condoms, and help FSWs believe they can control what happens to them. Emphasis should be placed on addressing pressure from partners to have sex without condoms and reinforcing self-efficacy by improving negotiation skills.