

A Health Survey on Chinese and Mongolian Migrant Workers residing in the Republic of Korea

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Objectives:

This study is an exploratory study by researchers organized to get preliminary information on social and health status of migrant workers residing in Korea with special concerns on STI/HIV infections with following specific objectives: to assess general social and health problems among Chinese, Mongolian, Korean-Chinese migrant workers in Korea; to collect information on the accessibility of health care in terms of health care need and demand; to study knowledge, attitude and practice on STI/HIV including their ways of management when they get infected; and to develop strategy of their health maintenance and promotion to the adequate level.

Methodology:

The study intended to be conducted on peer migrant workers of the focus group (also migrant workers) who gathered regularly in migrant's shelters; on arbitrary base five areas focused on shelter are selected. The questionnaire survey was conducted anonymously by 15 field assistants who belonged to focus group of migrant workers based on shelters: three field assistants from each ethnic group were recruited and trained by three field coordinators from each ethnic group, field administrator and researchers. The field assistant in turn made continuous contacts with their fellow migrants workers, asked their consent on the survey, distributed and collected the questionnaire completed. The sample size is 1104 migrant workers of which 313 are Korean-Chinese, 345 are Chinese and 346 are Mongolians.

Results:

Overall 64, 6 percent were men. The mean age was 31.8. As for legal status, 78 percent of the survey respondents were illegal migrants, which represented their unstable social status and this was predominantly so among Mongolians (87,6 per cent). With regard to education status, study population showed the relatively high attainments. Average total years stayed in Korea were 2,2 years. Average monthly income was much lower than the minimum monthly salary in Korea. Full-time regular job was predominant job status of the total (57 per cent), the highest among Mongolians (63 per cent). For job types, factory work was quite common. Smoking and alcohol use are indicated as harmful habits among migrants. The minimum conditions for safe work did not seem to be met considering several outcomes of responses. The respondents reported that emergency medical care were accessible only 11 per cent of the total, indicating the lack of medical accessibility. In both sexes, impoliteness of employers or other Korean

workers was ranked the first, ventilation, long working hour, high temperature as the following problems faced at the work place. For social problems, the study population ranked language as the first and, food & housing, health care, legal status as the next. Of the total, 16 5 reported ill-health during last two weeks, significantly higher among Mongolians (24 per cent). And as for past health status during the last one year, one-fourth reported ill- health, ranging from 23-29 per cent by ethnicity. Concerning STI, 0.8 per cent experienced it while staying in Korea, which was relatively higher among Mongolian males (1.7 per cent), quite a small percent though. Means of solving sexual desire while staying in Korea were various by sex and ethnicity. Among males, sex with a friend of opposite gender was 34 per cent, and sex with sex workers was 17 per cent. Among females, sex with a friend of opposite gender was per cent. Generally, workers' knowledge of ways of HIV transmission was quite accurate. But as for mosquito/insect bites, about 17 per cent of them had misconception that they could play a role in transmission of HIV. Even 9,4 per cent in male, 12 per cent in female misunderstood that just shaking hands with the person living with HIV could act as a source of HIV/AIDS infection. As for practice on HIV/AIDS prevention, in both sexes, seeking information (written) about HIV/AIDS ranked the highest and keeping single partner was the second, which represent that they stuck to what they could do by themselves. For mean knowledge score of HIV/AIDS transmission, Korean-Chinese showed the highest score in both sexes. In male mean knowledge score differences were significantly different by education status, monthly income and attitude toward HIV/AIDS.

Conclusion/Recommendations:

It appears that there exist a need to initiate comprehensive pre-departure programme for migrants in their home countries; It also might be useful if facilitate a drop-in center for counseling to be opened for migrants in both sending as well as receiving countries with close cooperation with trained migrants themselves. IEC programmes to address the misconceptions and misgivings about HIV/AIDS among migrant workers in Korea should be initiated based on existing shelters for migrants in Korea.

Note: Any one who is interested in receiving full report, please contact to Ms P. Tsetsgee via e-mail: p_tsetsgee@hotmail.com or neahiv@magicnet.mn, Phone/fax: 976-11-321278.