

Clients and Sex Work

CLIENTS – WHO ARE THEY?

Almost half of men who pay for sex have a partner.

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The Sandyford Initiative in Glasgow undertook a study of 2500 men who attended a sexual health clinic. One in ten said they had paid for sex. Of those around one in four said they repeatedly visited people who work in the sex industry, 43% had a partner and 20% had a sexually transmissible infection.

The researchers warned that their figures could be an under-estimate of the true numbers of men who pay for sex. Reports of unprotected vaginal sex were rare although unprotected oral sex was more common among the men who paid for sex locally. More than half of the men who paid for unprotected sex said that they had a partner.

Peter Baker, chief executive of the Men's Health Forum

stressed that the number of men who paid for sex in the general population – rather than among a

group who attended a sexual health clinic – was likely to be much lower. However, he said the figures appear to confirm a rising trend in the number of men who pay for sex. His reasons why this may be include the increasing instability and fragility of relationships, also because many men experience high levels of stress, anxiety and depression but are reluctant to seek help – or even just talk about their problems. Instead, men may seek respite through alcohol, drugs or sex. Mr Baker said there was less of a taboo about paying for sex. The greater access to sexually explicit material through the internet might also encourage the desire for sexual experimentation. He commented that there was a need to educate men as well as people who

work in the sex industry, about safer sex. "We have to acknowledge that many men will pay for sex and that they need to know more about condoms, the safety of oral sex, and how to access sexual health services."

Clients educating clients

Meanwhile, in eastern India, one innovative way of curbing HIV/AIDS has been to recruit the customers of sex workers. In Kolkata's notorious red light area, Sonagachhi, there are about 10,000 sex workers who live in

customers are either unaware of AIDS or not interested in safe sex, the anti-AIDS activists say they have enlisted almost 200 regular clients to teach fellow visitors about using condoms and having frequent blood tests.

A businessman and frequent visitor to brothels, said "we spend so much time in Sonagachhi that we thought that it was our duty to protect these girls from AIDS. There are thousands of men who come to Sonagachhi and refuse to wear a condom." Every evening this group of activists scout the

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brothels lining the narrow lanes in the north of the city and cater to the needs of more than 25,000 clients daily. While most

brothels for fellow customers and sex workers, talk to them about safer sex practices and encourage them to get involved in the





HIV/AIDS awareness campaign.

Clients – fined for refusing to use condoms

Clients who refuse to wear condoms in Indonesia's Papua province will be fined under a new bylaw that aims to curb the spread of HIV. The penalty of up to \$500 will be enforced in high-risk areas such as red-light districts, bars and hotels. People who do sex work can report any customers who have refused to use condoms, Joseph Rinta, head of Merauke regency's health office, said. Rinta said his office will implement a three-month program to introduce the measure to sex workers and their customers.

Closer to home, in New Zealand, a Christchurch man who deliberately took off his condom has become the first in New Zealand to be prosecuted under a new unsafe-sex law.

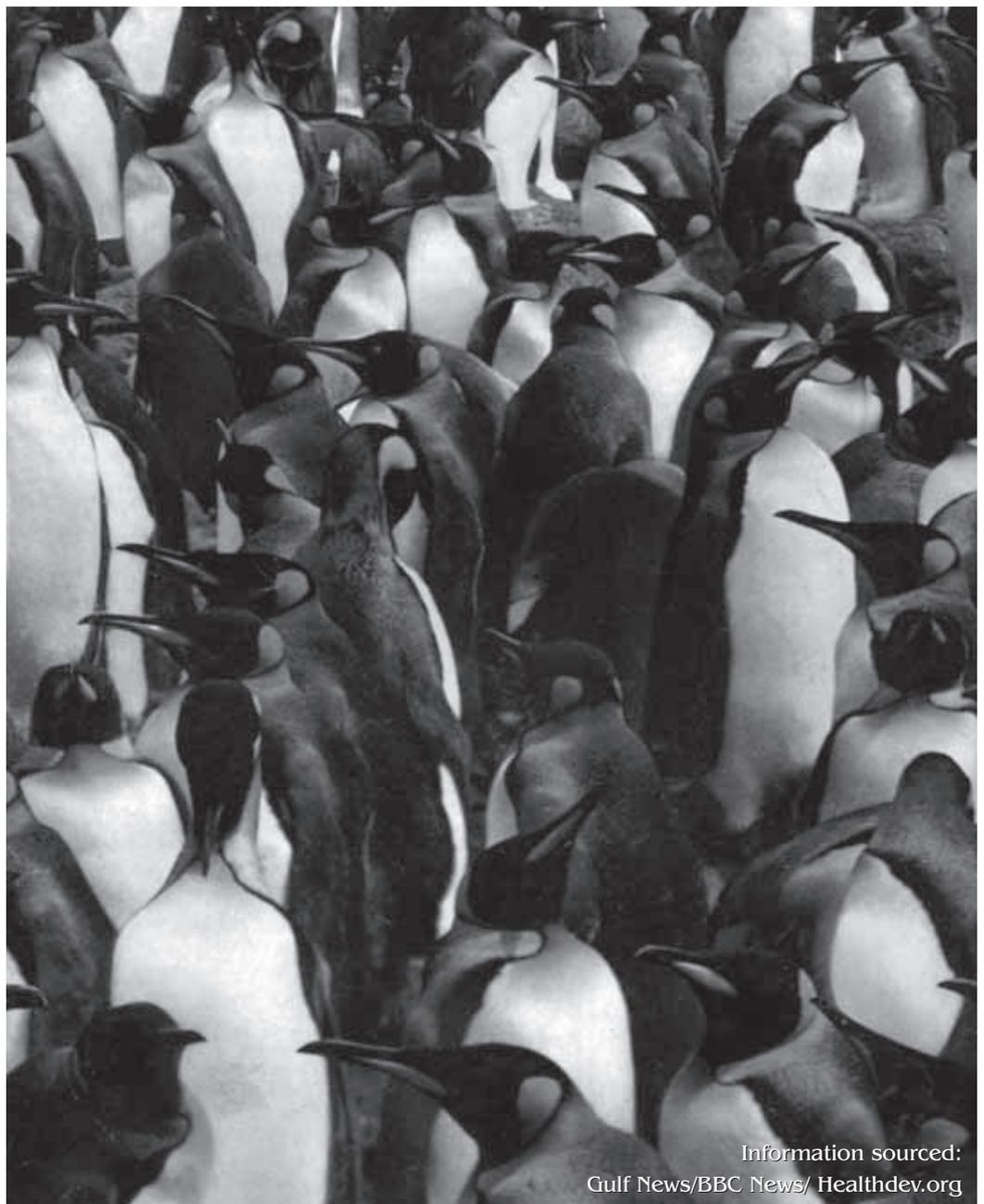
Daniel Morgan, 48, said he knew the sex worker would not have consented to him taking the condom off so he did it without her knowledge. He was fined \$400 and ordered to pay court costs. The sex worker involved has to wait another six weeks before knowing if the incident has given her HIV. She said "it feels like a death sentence. I still don't know whether it

will be one or not. I've gone through gruelling tests. I've looked after myself for so many years, practising safe sex for most of my life. How dare he take that away from me."

Regional coordinator at the New Zealand

Prostitutes Collective, Anna Reed said previously most people who work in the sex industry would not have been brave enough to make a complaint to the police. She hoped that the prosecution conviction and fine of a client who removed his condom

would act as a wake-up call to other people working in the sex industry.



Information sourced: Gulf News/BBC News/ Healthdev.org