

## Paper #138292

### Individual and system level health promotion project for Asian female sex workers in San Francisco

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**Issues:** The Health Project for Asian Women (HPAW) provides HIV prevention and health promotion counseling to Asian female sex workers at massage parlors and their managers/owners. Asian masseuses are exposed a high-risk work environment (e.g., high volumes of sexual encounters, violence, and substance use) with minimal protection from managers/owners. **Description:** Twenty-three massage parlors were identified in Tenderloin and Mission districts in San Francisco. Due to our culturally appropriate and consistent outreach efforts, more than 70% of massage parlors are accessible to our Vietnamese and Korean health educators who provide escort services for masseuses' medical check-ups and health promotion counseling (Three 1 and ½ hour sessions) for masseuses and owners at their parlors. The counseling programs are evaluated at pre-, post-, and 6-month follow-up interviews using a structured questionnaire. The pre-test data of masseuses (N=75) indicate that they work 11 hours/day for 5.5 days/week and have 25 male customers/week, on average, and that 24% had used drugs and 74% used alcohol. Masseuses' levels of AIDS knowledge were significantly increased at the post-test. **Lessons Learned:** It took a long time to establish rapport with Asian masseuses and managers/owners. The original intervention design (e.g., randomization) did not work for this highly stigmatized and hard-to-reach population. Providing services specific to their needs (e.g., escort services for masseuses and information about law and regulations for owners/managers) facilitate their participation in the intervention study. **Recommendations:** Recruiting culturally sensitive health educators and providing skills training and support for them are keys to continue a community-based intervention study.