

SUMMARY

This study was designed to identify the factors that lead to the process of acquiring repeated STD infections, and to identify the differences in demographic and behavioural characteristics between repeaters and non repeaters who attend the Central VD Clinic.

The study was conducted in the CVDC from March 1st 1988 to July 31st 1988, defining the repeater as a person who acquired two or more fresh STD infections in a period of twelve months. Repeaters and non repeaters were retrospectively identified from the records of patients who were registered in the CVDC from January 1st to June 30th 1987. A structured questionnaire was employed to get information required. 148 male repeaters and 161 male non repeaters, and 104 female repeaters and 104 non repeaters were studied. More detailed interviews with observations to cover attitudes towards STDs were carried out on a 10% sub sample of the respondents.

Repeaters of either sex were found to be younger than non repeaters and were single and had lower educational achievements, and were in certain occupational groups like labourers, traders, drivers etc. Majority of the male repeaters came from Colombo Municipal areas while majority of female repeaters came from suburbs of Colombo. There was no difference between the repeaters and non repeaters of either sex with regard to income, ethnicity and religion. Majority of repeaters of both sexes had gonorrhoea as their first STD infection and were reinfected within a shorter time interval. Most of the repeaters were younger than non repeaters when they first had their sexual relations. A significant majority of repeaters came to the CVDC voluntarily, and most of the

males had named more than one source of infection.

Though non repeaters, both males and females had scored higher marks for the knowledge of STDs, the knowledge content of non repeaters was not very high. There was a positive correlation between the attitudes towards STDs and the number of repeat infections, but more detailed analysis of this aspect showed that a fair proportion of repeaters also had negative attitudes towards STDs. Repeaters of either sex had more frequent sexual intercourse irrespective of their marital status, and had significantly higher number of extramarital sexual relations within a three month: period. A large: majority of female repeaters and a significant majority of male non repeaters were using some form of contraception. A significantly higher percentage of male and female repeaters were consuming alcohol and hard drugs.

Those variables which showed significant association with repeat infections were further analysed using logistic regression model to eliminate confounding effect of related variables, and to identify the factors which have a significant influence on the process of repetition.

This showed that the potential repeater can be predicted, and the demographic variables like age, address, marital status, education and the medical factors like type of first STD infection are important factors in predicting the probability of being a repeater or not, in patients of both sexes. Knowledge of STDs and cotraception were significant factors among males only. Promiscuity as defined as the number of extramarital partners was a significant factor, which influences acquisition of repeat infections.

Educational programmes to bring about long term improvements and a health promotion programmes to encourage the high risk groups to use practical methods of prophylaxis was suggested. Further studies are needed in the areas of knowledge and attitudes of health care providers towards STDs.