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OR VATHANAK: UNSAFE SEX PRACTICES AND ITS CORRELATES
AMONG COMMERCIAL SEX WORKER IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA.
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A descriptive study aimed to determine unsafe sex practices and its correlates among 150 commercial sex workers (CSWs) at Tourl Kork district, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. CSWs were interviewed using structured questionnaire in the brothel during 1-12 of March 1999. The study revealed that the distribution of unsafe sex practices was very high in the group of young CSWs. Most of CSWs were illiterate and poor, and it was found in this study that unsafe sex practice corresponded with level education and duration of working as CSWs. In general, CSWs had high knowledge, especially in prevention of STD, HIV/AIDS by condom use. The attitude of CSWs toward STD, HIV/AIDS was also good, which contrasted to the sex practice of CSWs almost all of which were unsafe. This finding demonstrated that good knowledge and good attitude were not enough to ensure the unsafe sex practice. Although a number of CSWs were in debt to the brothel owner, there was little influence from the brothel owner on CSWs. Moreover, CSWs seemed to have high bargaining power over their clients, despite many constraints imposed upon the CSWs, such as problem of dependents and condom supply. The most common source of health information was health personnel, even though it was not high enough.

Based on the finding, it is recommended that general education for children, especially among girls, should be strengthened in order to offer them opportunity in life. Education and information provided by health personnel should be more emphasized. Condom supply in the work place for CSWs should be provided. Further study should also be conducted among the group of indirect CSWs.