



PROSTITUTES' HEALTH IN ROME, ITALY

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Objectives of the study

In Italy the approximate number of victims of prostitution trade is 50,000.

In Italy come women from China, Nigeria, Albania, Romania, Ukraine, working for about 9 million Italian clients. The objectives of our study are to detect the main clinical problems of prostitutes working in Rome in order to protect their health and the health of the whole population.

Methods

From January 1997 to April 2003, 3.437 foreign prostitutes were registered for the first medical examination in our Department.

They came from : Nigeria (13,9%), Albania (13,1%), Moldavia (12,2%), Ukraine (11 ,0%), Bosnia (10,1%), Russia (9,0%), Slovenia (7,8%), Poland (5,7%), Hungary (2,4%), Brazil (2,0%), Peru (1,3%), Colombia (1,0%), unknown origin 1,8%.

Most of them (98, 8%) were undocumented or with an expired tourist residence permit.

Results

The main clinical problems detected were psychological (98, 4%) and in small part psychiatric; abortion was done in 98,3% of cases and all women asked far gynaecological or paediatric examination with or without a real need.

The main diseases diagnosed were: unspecified urinary infections (3,3%), burns (2,7%), non-gonococcal urethritis/cystitis (2,3%), trunk traumatism (2,2%),

keloids (1,4%), condyloma acuminata (1,2%), herpes genitalis (1,0%), HIV/AIDS infection (1,0%), gonococcal urethritis/cystitis (0,7%), viral hepatitis (0,5%), primary/secondary syphilis (0,4%), trichomoniasis (0,3%), chlamydial vaginitis (0,2%).

Conclusions

We were surprised about the low prevalence of HIV infection compared to other national and international studies; this result could be due to many reasons:

- Some prostitutes who refused to be tested for HIV infection knew to be seropositive for HIV.
- The majority (84, 6%) of women who accepted the test were young (less than 22 years old) and with a short history of prostitution (less than 12 months)
- Traders are careful about HIV infection in prostitutes and tend to eliminate seropositive women from the trade. Although several health prevention campaigns in all European countries have been done in order to protect prostitutes and their clients, and even though in Europe exist laws that protect victims of prostitution trade, we need further interventions with the aim of protecting undocumented migrant women and of preventing sexual transmitted diseases in young people.

References

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