

Gay Tourist Space and Sexual Risk Behaviour

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Introduction

In a growing literature on the geographic dimensions of gender and sexuality, a number of feminist and queer writers have convincingly argued and demonstrated the profound significance of gender and sexuality in the social construction of space (Duncan, 1996a). The distinction, in particular, between space which is 'public' and that which is 'private' intersects in multiple and substantial ways, with both possibilities and constraints on the acceptable performance of gender and sexual identities and relationships (Duncan, 1996b, Valentine, 1996). For lesbian women and gay men, in particular, the expression of their sexual preferences, in public space, even symbolically through clothing, hair styles and other emblematic signifiers of 'otherness', opens them to the risk of a spectrum of homophobic abuse which, at its extremes, can be physically violent and even fatal (Myslik, 1996; Toolis, 1997).

The dominance of the patriarchal-heterosexual order, and its spatial manifestations, has required gay men and lesbians to create their own queer spaces, to meet like-minded people, to have the freedom to express their sexuality openly, and to avoid the strictures of homophobia and its violent manifestations. In large urban contexts, commercial interests, both within and outside gay communities, have increasingly grasped the opportunities these circumstances provide, to offer services to and perhaps to exploit, the needs of a gay and lesbian 'market'.

One contemporary manifestation of these processes, operating on a social and commercial level, has been the growth of tourism services and resort sites which cater primarily for gay men. The cultural significance of travel and tourism for gay men is apparent from even a cursory glance at the gay press (e.g. during 1997, the *Pink Paper* launched a regular travel supplement), the recent growth of gay travel guides, and the number of tour operators marketing package holidays for gay men (Clift and Wilkins, 1995). Such sources serve to identify very readily the major tourist destinations attracting gay men in Europe and beyond (e.g. Ibiza, Sitges, Gran Canaria, Amsterdam, Paris etc.). To date,

very little social research has focused on this phenomenon, and many intriguing historical, cultural, political and geographic questions have yet to be posed, let alone investigated.

Nevertheless, due to the emergence of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in the late 70s and its continued epidemic growth internationally since then, some research attention has been given to the sexual behaviour of gay men in the context of international travel and tourism. The existing literature is surprisingly sparse, however, and extant studies vary substantially in their settings, sampling and methodologies. Consequently, empirical generalisations are difficult to draw (Clift and Wilkins, 1995).

Substantial studies of sexual behaviour among Western gay men in tourist resort destinations such as Thailand, Kenya, Brazil and Bali have been conducted by both German and American researchers, but the focus has been on commercial sex with male prostitutes (Ford, Wirawan and Fajans, 1993; Kleiber and Wilke, 1993). Such research is of questionable relevance to an understanding of sexual activity among a representative cross-section of gay men (most of whom would not seek commercial sex on holidays) in popular gay tourist destinations. In addition to existing field studies of gay tourists, several recent investigations have been conducted, in the context of genito-urinary medicine clinics in the UK (e.g. Daniels *et al.*, 1993). These have documented continued sexual risk behaviour among clinic-attending gay men in the context of travel abroad, and have pointed to the need to promote AIDS prevention and safer sex information for British gay men in the context of travel/tourism. Such studies, however, are decidedly limited in providing guidance for developing such initiatives, due to the specific samples of men investigated and the lack of details on the destinations and nature of travel involved.

To date, only one piece of research on the sexual behaviour of a cross-section of gay men in a popular gay tourist resort has been undertaken. This is a small scale survey of the sexual behaviour of gay tourists in Sitges conducted by Casson and Dockrell (1995: p. 3). It is worth noting the estimate they provide of the scale of gay tourism to this small resort in southern Spain, which is quite remarkable:

Sitges ... has a weekly tourist population of approximately 57,000 during the peak summer season from May to September. About 20% of visiting tourists are gay men. On any day during the holiday season we estimate that there are up to 10,000 gay holiday makers in Sitges.

Casson and Dockrell interviewed 58 men in areas frequented by gay men. The findings indicated that changes occurred on holiday in the way in which men found partners. Perhaps not surprisingly, more men used public sex environments on holiday (59%) compared with at home (46%). The survey also showed that 23% of the men questioned believed they were more likely to have unsafe sex on holiday and 18% were unsure. However, details of sexual activity given by the respondents and information gathered during 'participant observation' suggested that very few men had unprotected anal sex on holiday with men other than their regular partners. There was clear

evidence, however, that some men performed oral sex in ways they felt they would not at home, and in some cases they may well have exposed themselves to increased risk of sexually transmitted infections, if not Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which leads to AIDS:

I did stuff I don't normally do. This one guy, a French guy, I just sucked him off.(...) When he came it was all over my face, in my mouth too. Normally, no way, first taste of pre cum and it's out, they can cum on my face, on my chest, but never in my mouth. (p. 10-11)

Really, I'm a bit worried. I had three dicks in my mouth at once. That's not something I would normally do. (p. 11)

Further research on the sexual behaviour of gay men in tourist spaces is justified, therefore, on both theoretical and practical grounds. Theoretically, such research would contribute to an understanding of the factors affecting sexual behaviour and sexual risk. In particular, research should seek to establish the extent to which the level and nature of gay men's sexual activity, and their risk-taking, is affected by leaving the home environment for a short period and entering new leisure-oriented social environments offering increased potential for sexual contact.

Such research is important for the guidance it may offer in developing initiatives in HIV prevention for gay men travelling abroad. The UK Health Departments in their recent document, *HIV & AIDS Health Promotion: An Evolving Strategy*, identify both 'gay men' and 'people travelling to areas of world with higher HIV prevalence' as important, though separate, target groups for HIV prevention initiatives. These groups do overlap, however, as a large proportion of gay men travel abroad each year to areas of the world where the risks of infection associated with unprotected sex with other men may well be higher than in their home locality.

Aims of the study

The present study was concerned with exploring a number of key questions regarding the sexual behaviour of gay men in tourist contexts:

- Where are the most popular holiday destinations for gay men?
- What do gay men look for in a holiday and to what extent are opportunities for sex important holiday motivations for gay men?
- To what extent do gay men believe their sexual and risk taking behaviour changes when on holiday?
- To what extent do gay men engage in sexual activity with new partners while on holiday?
- To what extent do gay men engage in sexual activities which involve risk (i.e. unprotected anal sex)?
- Is it possible to identify demographic, biographical and contextual factors associated with are sexual activity (and risk) on holiday?
- What are the implications of the patterns emerging from the survey for targeted initiatives in HIV prevention?

Methodology

Just under 600 men provided information on their experiences of holidays and sexual activity by means of a self completion questionnaire. Approximately half of the sample was recruited in bars and clubs in central Brighton during two weeks of fieldwork in August 1996, and half through a postal survey conducted with the assistance of a local lesbian and gay magazine.

The questionnaire included questions on destinations visited over the previous five years, holiday motivations, attitudes towards sex on holiday and sexual behaviour and risk on up to two holidays taken in 1996 until the time of the survey. Information on demographic and biographical characteristics and aspects of sexual history (e.g. HIV status, previous sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) etc.) was also gathered.

Following completion of the survey, interviews were carried out with 30 gay men selected on the basis of their experience of sex on the first or only holiday reported: those who were not sexually active with a new partner; those who were sexually active with a new partner(s) but did not engage in penetration; those who engaged in penetrative sex with a new partner(s) and reported consistent use of condoms, and those who reported unprotected penetrative sex with a new partner (see Clift and Forrest, 1998 for full details of the methodology).

Results¹

Sample characteristics

Although 595 men completed the questionnaire, those visiting Brighton from over seas and those who did not identify as gay or bisexual were excluded, leaving a total sample of 562. Just over three-quarters of the sample were below the age of 40, just under three-quarters were in full-time, part-time or self employment and just under half reported being in a committed relationship. Just over a quarter of the sample (28.8%) reported experience of a sexually transmitted infection during the last five years, and of these 16.9% believed they had contracted an infection while on holiday. Information was requested on HIV status, and 9.1% of men described themselves as 'definitely positive'. Levels of sexual activity with new partners 'at home' during the year up to the survey varied considerably with 27.0% reporting no new partners, and 10.8% reporting 20 or more.

Gay men's holiday destinations

Gay men reported visiting a wide range of destinations abroad over the previous five years, with over 40% visiting Amsterdam, Paris and the United States. Well known gay tourism destinations in Southern Europe and beyond had been visited by varying proportions of men: Gran Canaria (31.5%), Ibiza (23.0%), Sitges (14.4%) and Mykonos (8.0%). Data gathered on holidays undertaken during 1996 provide a more detailed picture of tourism and

sexual activity among gay men. Out of 554 men providing information, 71.5% reporting having been on at least one holiday up to the time of the survey. The six most commonly visited destinations for the first or only holiday reported were: England (13.9% of respondents), USA (12.4%), Gran Canaria (8.1%), Holland (7.6%), France (7.1%) and Spain (6.8%). Holiday companions varied, with 25.3% of men reporting going on holiday alone, 38.0% with a boyfriend, 33.2% with a friend(s) and 3.6% with family.

What gay men look for in a holiday

In order to assess what gay men look for in a holiday, a list of 16 possible holiday motivations were presented (see Table 1). Over 70% of gay men rated 'comfort and good food' and 'rest and relaxation' as very important aspects of holidays. Interestingly, only just over a third of the sample rated 'opportunities to socialise with gay men' and 'gay culture and venues' as very important, and just under a third rated 'opportunities to have sex' as very important. Principal components analysis of this set of items revealed three readily interpretable factors: Gay social life and sex; Culture and sights, and Relaxation and comfort.

Table 1: What do gay men look for in a holiday? (n = 537-554)

How important are each of the following to you when you plan a holiday?	very %	fairly %	not %
Comfort and good food	70.9	25.1	4.0
Opportunities for rest and relaxation	70.2	22.5	7.3
Guaranteed sunshine	51.4	31.8	16.8
Good night-life	47.9	39.6	12.5
Opportunities to socialise with gay men	36.6	40.2	23.2
Gay culture and venues	39.1	41.1	19.7
Dramatic or beautiful landscapes	38.4	45.0	16.6
Opportunities to see local culture	37.5	46.3	16.2
Opportunities to have sex	29.3	35.3	35.4
Getting away from other people	27.6	36.6	35.8
Getting off the beaten track	27.5	39.1	33.4
Convenient and cheap holiday package	24.9	36.7	38.4
Seeing well known tourist sights	21.1	50.2	28.7
Visiting art galleries and antiquities	17.7	33.5	48.8
Opportunities to see wildlife and nature	13.3	39.1	47.6
Good sporting facilities/exercise	10.1	23.5	66.5

Does the sexual behaviour of gay men change on holiday?

Gay men's views regarding the impact of a holiday context on their sexual activity and risk-taking were assessed by presenting a series of statements with a standard five point Likert response scale. Opinions appeared to be fairly polarised (see Table 2). Just under half of the sample (48.9%) agreed that there are more opportunities for sex on holiday, but just over a third (34.8%) disagreed. Similarly, 38.6% agreed that they were more sexually active on holiday, while 42.0% disagreed. More significantly, however, 11.0% agreed that they found it easier to forget about safer sex on holiday, and 9.5% agreed they were more likely to take sexual risks on holiday — when compared to being at home.

How sexually active are gay men on holiday?

With respect to the first/only holiday in 1996, out of 391 men giving information, 47.8% reported sex with a new partner(s). Numbers of partners ranged from one to 200, with 36.7% of those giving information reporting four or more new partners.

Of 188 men with new partners giving details about penetration, 113 or 60.1% reported penetrative sex, with numbers of penetrative partners ranging from 1 to 100, and 25.0% of men reporting four or more such partners. Among the 88 men reporting insertive anal intercourse and giving details of condom use, 89.8% reported always using condoms (i.e. 10.2% or 9 men reported less than consistent use), and among 70 men reporting receptive intercourse and giving details of condom use, 78.6% reported consistent condom use (i.e. 21.4% or 15 men reported inconsistent use).

Table 2: Gay men's views regarding holidays and sex

Statement	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
I think that HIV prevention for gay men on holidays is important	93.7	2.0	4.3
There tend to be more opportunities for sex when I am on holiday	48.9	16.3	34.8
I tend to be more sexually active on holiday than at home	38.6	19.4	42.0
I tend to take more precautions if I have sex with someone new on holiday than at home	36.6	15.8	47.6
My risk from sexual infections, including HIV, is probably higher when I am on holiday	24.5	10.2	65.3
It is easier to forget about safer sex when I am on holiday than at home	11.0	7.0	82.0
I am more likely to take sexual risks when I am on holiday than at home	9.5	9.9	80.6

What factors are associated with sexual activity on holiday?

Three sexual behaviour indices were constructed for the purpose of further analysis to explore demographic, biographic and contextual factors associated with sexual activity on holiday (for full details see Clift and Forrest, 1998):

No sex with new partners	vs.	Sex with new partners
Non-penetrative sex	vs.	Penetrative sex
Penetrative sex with consistent condom use	vs.	Penetrative sex with inconsistent or no condom use

The following factors were significantly associated with a greater likelihood of sex with new partners on holiday: higher income, being unattached, wider travel history over the last five years, high interest in holidays which offer opportunities for socialising with gay men, low interest in holidays offering 'sights and culture' and 'rest and relaxation', agreement that holidays increase opportunities for sex and enhance risk, greater numbers of sexual partners at home, a history of sexually transmitted diseases over the previous five years, visiting gay resorts (see Table 3), being on holiday alone or with friends, taking condoms, and taking lubricant.

Table 3: New partners in the most frequently visited destinations

Destination (number reporting visit during 1996)	No new sexual partners		New sexual partners	
	n	%	n	%
England (54)	28	51.9	26	48.1
United States (49)	27	55.1	22	44.9
Gran Canaria (32)	8	25.0	24	75.0
Holland (30)	15	50.0	15	50.0
Australia (11)	4	36.4	7	63.6
France (27)	17	63.0	10	37.0
Spain (27)	12	44.4	15	55.6
Ibiza (12)	4	33.3	8	66.7
Germany (10)	4	40.0	6	60.0

Number of new sexual partners at home was also compared with number of new partners reported during the first/only holiday in 1996. It is interesting to note that of 164 men giving information on partners at home and on holiday, 30.5% (50) reported as many, or more, partners in the course of their first holiday compared with the whole of the year at home.

Fewer factors were significantly associated with a greater likelihood of penetrative sex with new partners on holiday: being unattached, agreement that holidays increase opportunities for sex and enhance risk, greater number of partners at home, taking condoms and taking lubricant.

As we saw earlier, the proportion of men reporting unprotected sex on holiday is quite low. Nevertheless, it is possible to compare men reporting consistent condom use during anal sex with those reporting inconsistent or no condom use. Only three factors out of the entire array of data gathered appeared to have any bearing on whether men engaging in penetrative sex, used condoms consistently or not:

1. *Agreement with the 'holidays, sex and risk' items* — Among men who strongly agreed with these items, 40.7 per cent reported unprotected sex, compared with only 3.2 per cent of men who disagreed with these items ($\chi^2 = 17.9$, $df=2$, $p<.0005$).
2. *Positive HIV status* — As Table 4 indicates, among men who described themselves as 'definitely HIV negative ($n=50$), 10.0% engaged in unprotected sex, whereas among 'definitely' HIV positive men ($n=9$), no fewer than 44.4% reported unprotected sex. As a large proportion of the cells in this table have expected frequencies under five, a comparison was made between men describing themselves as either definitely or probably negative, and definitely positive or not sure. A statistically significant association emerged ($\chi^2 = 11.8$, $df=1$, $p<.001$).
3. *Not taking condoms* — Out of 110 men reporting penetrative sex, 100 reported taking condoms and 10 did not. Of men who took condoms with them, 13.0 per cent reported unprotected sex, whereas among those who did not take condoms, 40.0 per cent reported penetration without condoms (Fisher's exact test, $p<.05$).

Table 4: HIV status and unprotected sex on holiday one

HIV status	Penetrative sex			
	consistent condom use		inconsistent condom use	
	n	%	n	%
Definitely negative	45	90.0	5	10.0
Probably negative	22	95.7	1	4.3
Not sure	15	31.8	7	31.8
Definitely positive	5	55.6	4	44.4
	87	83.7	17	16.3

Discussion

The principal focus of this research is on sexual activity with new partners among gay men on holiday, especially holidays abroad, and the extent to which such activity involves risk. It is clear from the survey findings, however, that a substantial proportion of men did not engage in sexual activity with new partners. In addition, it is clear that several factors are associated with reports of new sexual partners, not least: relationship status, holiday companions, holiday motivations, attitudes towards sex on holiday and levels of sexual activity with new partners at home. The interview material helped to illustrate some of these issues and to throw further light on additional factors affecting men's sexual behaviour on holiday in different destinations. Following each quotation given below is a pseudonym, age and reported HIV status.

For some gay men, travel is primarily about the destination being visited and what it has to offer as a place, rather than the opportunities which may be on offer for sexual contact with gay men. In fact, holidays can be an opportunity to get away from 'gay life':

A lot of the time I actually find I go on holiday to get away from 'gay life'. I suppose I'm quite atypical in that with a lot of people when you go on holiday it's a chance to let your hair down and meet new people and probably have a bit of a fling and sexual experiences. I actually go away to get away from that. It's like, often I find when I'm on holiday I feel very non-sexual. I'd say that I don't actually actively seek out gay destinations. Sex was very low on my agenda. (Andrew, 32, HIV-)

I've never ever had full sex. Yeah, I've done the odd thing which, I'm not ashamed of doing. But I've never gone through and had unsafe sex at all. I've never been on a holiday specifically for that anyway. I've just gone because I've wanted to go somewhere just to actually see it, and you know, I'm not a voyager or anything like that, but I think you've got to try something before you can condemn it or whatever. That's my attitude anyway. (Bryan, 29, HIV-)

In addition to lack of interest in sex, or casual sex, some gay men also avoided sex with new partners on holiday because of anxieties they experienced over potential risks in an unfamiliar, non-western, cultural setting. In the following account a gay man provides an account of circumstances which effectively inhibited him taking up an obvious offer of sex while on holiday in Egypt:

I mean we took this camel ride with this Nubian guy who had camels and I think it was like, a very family thing. And we went back to their home and Egypt being Egypt, everyone had a little smoke and there was one of the lads there, he was very good looking, he was probably like 19 something like that, extremely good looking Nubian and like all of them, they was all up for it. Money wasn't said or spoke about,

but it cost us a fortune that day. You know, it started off, I forget how many Egyptian pounds or something like that to hire the camels for an hour and we ended up spending about 8 hours with them and parted with every penny in our wallet. They even wasn't happy with that. They wasn't happy with that. They wanted my mate's watch and stuff like that at the end of it, but he took us back to his house and he was making very, very, let's go up stairs sort of thing to my friend. And my friend was very nervous about it anyway. (Edward, 34, HIV)

On the other hand, many gay men do engage in sexual activity with new partners on holiday abroad, especially in resort settings specifically catering for gay men. Accounts given by gay men of sexual activity on holiday provide a concrete and graphic indication of the issues we are concerned with in this work and highlight the significance the powerful impact that a change in social setting can have on the sexual behaviour of some gay men.

In the following account, one of our interviewees comments on the general shift in attitude and behaviour he has seen among gay men on holiday:

They're abroad, they're a bit wrecked and they start doing things that they wouldn't normally do at home... Mainly because your own inhibitions go down. You're in an area which may or may not be new to you but the men are. Because people don't know you, you certainly feel as if you can behave in a way that is different to the way you normally behave. And I know quite a few people that are at home and they're normally really uptight and prudish, you see them on holiday and you think 'that's not the same person'. I mean they're screaming round the bars, they're throwing drugs down their necks like they're going out of fashion, they're drinking like fish, they're sleeping with anything that they can get (...) It's just amazing how much people do change on holiday and then they're back to their usual prim and proper selves. Just like two weeks of letting rip and being a completely different person. It's how they want to live but wouldn't dare to live at home because they are going to have to actually face these people the next day. Whereas when you're on holiday you don't have to face them again. (David, 34, HIV+)

Other respondents reinforced the significance of anonymity in giving rise to reduced inhibitions and heightened sexual activity:

My attitude changes. It's fresh faces, fresh meat, fresh trade. Quite easily available, depending on where you go. Yeah you don't know them, they don't know you. You don't have to face them over tea and cakes and a chat. I think I'm more sexually active when I'm on holiday (Frank, 50, HIV-)

I suppose that when you've got all the sunshine and everything and you've got a few gin and tonics down you feel a bit more free. Yeah,

I'd say it does. You're more rampant I think when you're on holiday then what you are at home. Probably because you think, oh you can get away with it, nobody, you sneeze in Brighton, everybody knows about it (Gregory, 45, HIV status uncertain)

Yes, I can understand why people do it because, I'd think, I'd never dreamt of, before I actually started going abroad, over the last few years, I would have never dreamt of going into a dark room if there was one in this country because of being seen by somebody who knows me. But when you're abroad I think your inhibitions drop. Whereas, you just don't care because yeah, they see you for two weeks and then you're gone. And I think a lot of people do have the same attitude, where, oh yeah, nobody knows me, I'll let myself go a bit. (Brian, 29, HIV-)

A further factor which emerges very clearly from our accounts is the greater opportunity for sex on holiday as a result of greater leisure and a higher concentration of gay men in one place than might be found at home — especially in a small town. In the following account, the emphasis is placed much more on opportunity than on a change in attitude or behaviour as such:

I think it's the opportunity. Um... you know, where here in Hastings we've got one club in Hastings that we go to maybe twice a week. Um... but yes, suddenly you're like a sort of kid in a toy shop when you go somewhere like Blackpool where it changes. You know, suddenly, you know, as a gay person you feel although you're in a minority, much more in a majority there. And um, I don't think our attitude is such to change. The opportunity, the time I think. When you're on holiday you've got more time to meet more people. (Ian, 37, HIV status uncertain)

While it is clear that the context, frequency and character of sexual encounters may change on holiday, there is also evidence, from the survey, of sexual risk-taking on holiday among a small proportion of gay men. Risk behaviour appeared to be more common among HIV+ men, and this was reflected, to some extent, in the accounts provided by positive men interviewed. A number of respondents discussed saunas and back rooms as a context for sex and the risks involved. One HIV+ respondent discussed a recent holiday in Ibiza during which he had sex with 12 partners. After describing the first encounter he turns his attention to the rest:

... So that leaves me eleven. Now those eleven are also very easy to get through cause this holiday is quite fresh in my mind as well. Sadly to say, seven of these were then all on one night and this was very very naughty of me. And I did a night where I was a bit of a slag. And it's extremely easy to do in the club there called Amphora. (Harry, 38, HIV+)

The interviewee describes in great detail the layout of the club and the activity that tends to go on in three rooms which become progressively darker. And as they become darker so the pattern of sexual activity tends to change:

But the third room is primarily, that is the fuck room but there that's also multifuck room. So that multifuck is, anyone who's in there is really in there because, you know.... in this room the light is so minimal that you can barely see a thing at all. These rooms are dangerous (...) because let's face it most of the time you're just basically stripped off and its like a proper orgy type fuck party. Now at any one time there could be twenty, thirty people in each of these rooms. (Harry, 38, HIV+)

Other accounts from HIV+ men in our sample were also significant for the insights they provide into the risk behaviour of their partners on holiday, particularly their preparedness to continue with penetrative sex even when told of a man's positive status:

I mean, I tend not to be too much different. I drink a little more but I wouldn't say I get into any riskier practices but I do tend to have a slightly more blasé attitude towards it. Like I'm HIV but I tend to forget about it unless I actually get into a situation where somebody is actually, we're going to get into something penetrative. Then we're going to have to start pointing fingers and saying, 'right, OK, this is the situation' and if they don't disagree, then we take it a bit further on and see how it goes. (David, 34, HIV+)

Implications for HIV/AIDS prevention

It is clear from the data reported above that a majority of gay men in the sample investigated either avoided sexual contact on holiday, or engaged in safer forms of sexual activity. Only a small minority of men reported unsafe penetrative sex with new partners. Clearly, prevention initiatives need to be targeted at those men who are more likely to engage in unsafe behaviours. A general campaign for gay men focusing on HIV risks in the context of holidays through the gay press, leaflets, posters etc., may well have a useful function in maintaining awareness of the issue, but such information may be perceived by many gay men as unnecessary on a personal level, or even irrelevant to their circumstances.

Prevention material should highlight factors associated with sexual risk taking on holiday to improve the targeting and relevance of messages to men at most risk. This would include, for instance, making specific reference to destinations in which sexual activity is most readily available; men's motivations and attitudes towards sex on holiday; men's general patterns of sexual activity at home and their sexual histories; the disinhibitory factors associated with alcohol use, holiday atmosphere and specific settings in which sexual activity takes place.

Campaigns and prevention activities of a general kind through the gay media and in gay social settings has a place, but prevention messages should also be targeted through channels specifically associated with the process of organising travel and holidays. Gay tour companies and travel agencies have a potentially significant role to play in reminding gay men of possible risks in destinations which attract large numbers of gay men from many different countries of origin. Further work is required to explore the possibilities for involving commercial interests in HIV prevention initiatives targeting gay men.

Prevention activities are also particularly crucial within the destinations attracting gay men for holidays, and most especially in and around specific social and sexual venues. In this survey, men were asked whether they had seen safer sex promotion material in destinations and resorts they had visited and whether condoms and lube were readily available. The results show that for certain well known gay destinations, particularly Gran Canaria, levels of awareness of gay men of safer sex material being displayed was surprisingly low. Further work is required to determine the extent to which safer sex promotion is undertaken in key gay tourism destinations in Europe and beyond, and to assess the potential for further developments in this field.

Finally, there is clear evidence that Genitourinary medicine services provide a key role in relation to the prevention of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases among gay men. The potential risks associated with sexual activity on holiday should be routinely discussed with gay men during consultations at Genito Urinary Medicine clinics, and specific information and advice on holiday risks be made available.

Note

Selected results are reported here. For full details see Clift and Forrest, 1998. For a summary see Forrest and Clift, 1997.

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