

CHARACTERISTICS OF HORMONE USE BY *TRAVESTIS* AND TRANSGENDER WOMEN OF THE BRAZILIAN FEDERAL DISTRICT: A RESPONDENT-DRIVEN SAMPLING STUDY

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BACKGROUND

Travestis and transgender women, in search of signs of corporal femininity, resort to different technologies for body modification, such as hormones (1). Due to characteristics of frequent access denial to health services, the use of these hormones occurs, mainly, by self-medication (1). They are considered key population due to high HIV prevalence found in Brazil and worldwide (2). Therefore, discussing other aspects of health, such as access to inputs and healthcare services are part of the concept of HIV Combination Prevention, under its structural approaches. This study aims to describe the self-reported prevalence of hormone use by *travestis* and transgender women in the Brazilian Federal District.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study with RDS sampling, containing a KAP questionnaire, carried out with *travestis* and transgender women over 18 years of age, with some relationship to the Brazilian Federal District and never having participated in the study. The statistical analysis used 95% confidence intervals. Estimated prevalence used the RDS-II estimator. All analyzes were performed in program R, version 3.4.4 using the RDS package (3).

RESULTS

We analyzed information from 201 participants. The study had a young sample, with median age of 24 years. The overall prevalence of continuous hormone use was 64.5%. The most used formulation was the one that combines estrogen and progesterone (86.2%), in the injectable (75.1%) and oral (66%) forms, respectively. A great part (84%) of the participants got the hormones directly in the pharmacies, without medical prescription. The guidance on use of these medicines came from other *travestis* and transgender women in 41% of the cases. Satisfaction with the use of hormones was high (over 70%), as well as the side effects felt (in 63% of cases). Discontinuation of hormone use in the event of side effects was the attitude taken by a great part of the respondents (43%).

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrated the reality of great rates of self-medication indicating poor access to healthcare services, reflected in high rates of side effects, discontinuation of use and receipt of technical information only from peers. Related to the structural approaches to HIV Combination Prevention, this kind of studies about access are very important because they can be considered a proxy to access of these persons, suggesting a lack of access to HIV inputs and healthcare services as well. More studies to confirm this hypothesis are fundamental

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