Access to Health Care for Sex Workers in Germany – what do we know?

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Disclosure

• Affiliations
  – Treasurer of the German STI Society
  – Chairwoman of the German working group on sexual health

• Funding sources
  – No external funding from pharmaceutical companies
  – Exception: Diagnostic tests for Outreach study funded by Hologic®
Legal situation

- Health insurance is mandatory in Germany
  - Private or statutory health insurance
- Prostitution Act (2002)
  - Granted legal access to statutory health insurance (and other social benefits)
  - Brothel owners were legally allowed to insure their employees
- Temporary improved access to health insurance
  - 2013: reduction of back payments for previously uninsured persons
# Access to regular health insurance for sex workers in Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Health insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Employed as sex worker or in another job</td>
<td>• Statutory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-employed</td>
<td>– No need for professional disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Statutory (voluntary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Only if already previously insured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Statutory (family member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Income &lt;400€/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When do sex workers have difficulties access to health care?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No previous health insurance</th>
<th>• Need for back payments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Migration from EU countries  | • Health insurance in country of origin needed for EU “Blue card”  
  • May be refused as reimbursement too low |
| No stay permit              | • No access to health insurance |
Alternatives to regular health care for persons without health insurance

• Local public health offices
  – Anonymous (free) HIV/STI counselling possible
  – Test offers vary by city/region
  – Often without gynaecological service
  – Other health conditions not treated

• NGOs
  – Usually only for acute conditions

→ Health insurance needed to obtain comprehensive health care
Do sex workers have access to health care in Germany?

- Information from
  - KAP-Surv-STI (2010-11)
  - Outreach Study (2013)
Evaluation of the Prostitution Act – Ministry for Family 2004

- Survey among 305 sex workers
  - Mostly recruited by local public health authorities or counselling centres
  - 91% female
  - 79% German nationality
  - 52% with vocational training

Source: Kavemann et al.
## Insurance status 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Full-time sex worker</th>
<th>Part-time sex worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No health insurance</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Insurance status independent from age, level of income
- ¾ statutory insurance, 1/3 as family member
KAP-Surv STI

Cross-sectional study among female sex workers (FSW) attending local public health offices (2010-2011)
KAP-Surv STI - Origin of FSW
n=1412

- Germany: 26%
- Western Europe: 9%
- Central Europe: 8%
- Eastern Europe: 8%
- sub-Saharan Africa: 1%
- South America/Caribbean: 2%
- Asia: 0%
- Other: 9%
- n.a.: 2%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin in %</th>
<th>Health insurance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other country</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KAP-Surv STI - Health insurance status and German language skills, n=1412
KAP-Surv STI – health insurance status by age groups, n=1412

Age groups
- < 20
- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- > 59

Health insurance status
- Health insurance n.a.
- Health insurance yes
- Health insurance no
KAP-Surv STI – factors associated with health insurance status, n=1412

Preliminary results of multivariable analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adjusted Odds Ratio</th>
<th>95% confidence interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tested positive for STI</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.66-4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in years</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.93-0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign origin</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>9.95-24.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outreach-Study


- Recruitment only via outreach at work places
- Short questionnaire for SW
  - Sex, country of birth, language skills, health insurance, duration sex work
  - Use of cultural and language mediators
- Self-collected vaginal swabs/urine
- Recruitment of 1363 women, 73 men and 16 transgender
Outreach-Study – country of birth of FSW
n=1357

28% from Romania and 21% from Bulgaria
Outreach-Study - health insurance status  
\(n=1452\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender in %</th>
<th>Health insurance valid for Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outreach-Study - health insurance status in FSW by country of birth

n=1357

Health insurance status valid for Germany

- yes
- no
- not known

Country of origin

Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Latvia, Russia, Hungary, Dom.Rep., Thailand, Total
Outreach-Study - health insurance status in FSW by German language skills, n=1343

Health insurance status valid for Germany:
- yes
- no
- not known

German language skills:
- fluent/basic
- none
Outreach-Study - health insurance status in FSW by age group, n=1344

Health insurance status valid for Germany
- yes
- no
- not known

Age groups:
- <20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- >39
Potential risk factors in FSW for STI positivity

- Age (ref: "< 39 years")
  - <20 years
  - 20-29 years
  - 30-39 years

- Duration sex work (ref: "> 5 years")
  - <1 year
  - 1-2 years
  - 3-5 years

- Valid health insurance (ref: "yes")
  - no/not known

- Ever visited LPHA? (ref: "yes")
  - no/not known

- Country of birth (ref: "Germany")
  - abroad

- German language skills (ref: "mother tongue")
  - none
  - basic/fluent

- Region of Origin (ref: "Germany")
  - Bulgaria
  - Poland
  - Romania
  - other Central Europe

Prevalence Ratio for STI
## Outreach study – factors associated with health insurance status

Preliminary results of multivariable analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Adjusted Odds Ratio</th>
<th>95% confidence interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign origin</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>14.9 – 48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No German language skills</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>3.14 – 7.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in sex work</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.67 – 0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in years</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.92 – 0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Low proportion of sex workers have valid health insurance
  – Especially migrants (Romania and Bulgaria)
• Factors contributing to lack of insurance coverage
  – Language barrier, lack of experience
  – Low education? No insurance in country of origin?
• Association between insurance coverage and STI prevalence
Recommendations

• Facilitate access to regular health care for migrant sex workers (and other migrants)
  – No back payments as conditions to access health insurance

• Strengthen anonymous counselling and testing services throughout Germany
  – Including gynaecological services
  – Outreach work to reach the most vulnerable sex workers
Acknowledgments

- All participants of the studies
- All participating LPHA
- Labor Krone
- Colleagues at RKI: Stine Nielsen, Klaus Jansen