

Genital hygiene practices of fishermen targeted for a topical microbicide intervention against sexually transmitted infections in Kisumu, Kenya.

Abstract:

Research on hygiene has been relatively limited in the current era of rigorous observational studies and clinical trials. We set out to investigate the perception and practices of genital hygiene among fishermen working on the beaches along Lake Victoria, targeted for a topical male microbicide hygiene intervention. We conducted 12 focus group discussions involving fishermen (n = 130), recording the discussions in Dholuo (the local language) and transcribing them verbatim before translating into English. Transcripts were double-coded and analysed using constant comparative analysis. Despite easy access to lake water and recognition of a link that may exist between poor genital hygiene and the risk of penile infection and poor sexual relationships, few fishermen regularly washed their genitalia due to fear/embarrassment from cleaning their genitalia in public, traditional Luo beliefs such as that washing with soap would reduce the fish catch, lack of time because of their busy schedules, laziness and lack of responsibility, and excessive consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs. Hygiene practices of the fishermen were poor and could contribute to genital infections including sexually transmitted infections. Given the fishermen's poor genital hygiene practices, they may benefit from hygiene intervention, including that provided by penile microbicides, which can be applied in the privacy of their bedrooms.