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THE INSTRUCTIONAL CONDOM STICKER

(A FOLLOW-UP)

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BACKGROUND

In October of 1988, AIDSCOM/PROCETS/INSAPEC/COIN undertook a study (with a sample of Santo Domingo female sex workers) to determine the level of knowledge of condom use and ability to put it on correctly. The results furnished the information needed to design a condom instructional material to teach the correct use of the condom as a prevention measure against AIDS. The pilot material was designed with the help of a group of female sex workers who determined that the instructions would be best used if presented in a sticker which would be placed on the walls of the hotel/motel rooms where they tended their clients.

The pilot sticker was then pre-tested with members of this target population; the results suggested very dramatic changes. A second pre-test to validate those changes was then carried out with more female sex workers. Two versions came out of this exercise: one for the motels, and another for the brothels. To be sure of its acceptance by the clients, a third pre-test was carried out with potential male clients of the female sex workers, who basically had no objection or suggested dramatic changes to the material.

Based on this validation process, a large format sticker (6.5" x 15") was produced. They were placed on the walls of 1,353 rooms of 62 sex motels, hotels and brothels. A monitoring visit made three months later to a sample of nine establishments showed that in 89% of 393 rooms checked, the sticker had been totally ripped off the wall or was torn.

Reflecting on these results, the reasons that best seemed to explain the rejection was the size of the sticker and the place where it was stuck. The size was too big, too self-imposing; and visually, too aggressive. Also, what seemed to be wrong was the place where it was stuck: that is, on the wall next to the bed where the couple would be having sexual intercourse. It was a "threat message", too close to the site of the action.

These conclusions were reached after talking to the health inspectors who had placed the stickers on the walls and some of the female sex workers who had seen them.

It is not too clear who in fact tore the sticker off the wall. It can be hypothesized that it was either the client, who felt enraged by the sticker's presence or its "menacing" message that interrupted his sexual activity (the words AIDS and CONDOM stood out in bright red color), or the female sex worker who feared that his client would react negatively to the presence of the instructional sticker, or the administrators of the hotel-motel who judged the material would be offensive to the clients, even though it was explained to them the prevention objective desired.

Taking into account all these possible reasons, a smaller version (4" x 8.5") of the instructional condom sticker was printed in order to minimize the "visual size threat" and this time it was placed on the walls of the bathrooms. It is customary that a female sex worker asks her client to wash up before the sexual activity begins. This new smaller condom instruction version was thus placed in the bathrooms where there would be a big chance for a client to see it. Six months afterwards, a rapid assessment of the stickers' presence was made. The results are the following.

2. SAMPLE. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

2.1 The Sticker

With the help of three inspectors, 36 sex hotels-motels were visited in January 1990 and an inspection of 718 rooms where stickers had been placed was made. The inspectors had to check the presence or absence of the condom instructional sticker, be it the large or the small size version.

In the following Table, it is evident that the sticker has had a rather low survival rate (17%), but still higher than the 11% of the stickers placed previously. Not too bad; it was expected to find much less than ten percent of them.

Table 1

PRESENCE
Condom Instructional Sticker

No. of Hotels Visited:	27	Rooms:	552
No. of Motels Visited:	9	Rooms:	166
	36		718

ROOMS WITH/WITHOUT STICKERS

	Presence		Condition			
With Stickers:			Mot.	Hot.	Total	%
Big Size	43	6%	Torn 7	62	69	55
Small Size	81	11%	O.K.	55	55	45
	124	17%				
Without Stickers:	594	83%				
Total Rooms:	718	100%				

Of those found, it was important to determine the actual state in which they were. Of the 124 seen still on the walls of the rooms, 45% still were in readable condition; that is, they were not torn or half ripped. The survival rate of the sticker was much higher in the hotels than in the motels. It should be noted that the hotels are much cheaper than the motels and thus the clients that go to them are less educated, and belong possibly to a lower social economic class; which could be why there is a higher proportion of torn stickers in the hotels.

2.2 The Client

Being suspicious that there might be a few rooms with stickers, it was decided to complement this data with an equal fast assessment of how many potential male clients had seen the sticker, since even if a sticker individually may have had a short life-span, it still may have had a chance to have been seen by some clients.

Thus a valid sample of 106 potential clients were interviewed in bars, beer vending neighborhood stores, hotels and restaurants (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

POTENTIAL CLIENTS INTERVIEWED

No. of Clients Interviewed

In Bars:	54
Neighborhood Stores:	31
Hotels:	22
Restaurants:	<u>2</u>
	106

Each one was asked whether he had seen the large and/or the small condom sticker version. The above hypotheses was well established since 58% had seen the large sticker at one time or another and 31% of them had also seen the small version. See Table 3.

TABLE 3

SEEN/WHERE?

	Big Stickers	Small Stickers
Seen?:		
Yes	58%	31%
No	<u>42%</u>	<u>69%</u>
	100%	100%
Where?		
Hotel Room	61%	73%
Motel Room	13%	6%
Other	<u>26%</u>	<u>21%</u>
	100%	100%

Equally impressive is the fact that the majority had seen either the large size sticker (61%) or the small size one (73%) in a hotel room. Less frequently were the motel rooms mentioned. Not surprising, since these are more expensive and the potential clients interviewed were low income males.

Thus the fact that the stickers had been placed in the site where the actual sexual activity took place, was in fact a good decision. It is backed up by these results.

Taking advantage of the interview, a couple of questions regarding his attitude towards the sticker seen were asked. One of them simply asked him if he had disliked having seen the sticker there, and almost all said they had not disliked it (92% of those that had seen the large size sticker, and 94% of those that had seen the small version). See Table 4.

TABLE 4
STICKER
IMPACT/USEFULNESS

	Big Sticker	Small Sticker
Did you dislike seeing it?	%	%
No	92	94
Yes	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100
Was it useful at that moment?	%	%
Yes	73	91
No	15	9
No Answer	<u>12</u>	<u> </u>
	100	100

Additionally, they were asked whether having seen the instructional condom sticker had served them for any purpose at that moment. Of those that had seen the large size sticker, 73% said it had served them for a purpose, and of those that had seen the small version, the proportion goes much higher, since 91% found some use of it. The main reasons of why it was useful for them at that moment were:

- It made them think that the use of a condom would help them to avoid AIDS.
- Condoms help to prevent STD's.
- By using a condom one avoids being infected.
- It helped to understand how to use the condom correctly.
- Made them think about their health and how to protect it.
- It suggested how to avoid an unwanted pregnancy.

2.3 The "paperback" Version of the Condom Sticker

When the directors of the program verified that the sticker had been ripped off, it was decided to make a paper edition of the same condom instructions to be put along side the two condoms that the administrators have been "stimulated" to provide by a MOH Health Decree.

This pink paper edition takes advantage of the free space found in the back. This space was used to include several additional messages that came out of the initial condom study: the avoidance of the use of creams and oils that destroy condoms, and several refutals to answer the most common argument made against condom use (reduction of pleasure).

Since the questionnaire was short; a couple of questions regarding the paper version were included. The clients were thus asked if they had seen it, where, and their reaction to it. The results were the following:

TABLE 5

PINK INSTRUCTIONAL STICKER

Did you see it?		Where?	
No	69%	Hotel Room	74%
Yes	32%	Motel Room	12%
		Other	14%
What did you do?		Was it useful?	
Took it	47%	Yes	74%
Left it	29%	No	26%
Other	24%		

Once more, the recall of having it seen at one time or another is high, since 32% affirmed having seen it. It is high because there was a small quantity printed and it was not placed in all the same rooms where the stickers had been placed. The majority had seen it either in a sex hotel room (74%) or in a motel room (12%).

As with the sticker, these potential clients were asked whether it had served them for any purpose and the majority, 74%, said YES. Almost half of them, 47%, took it with them, which in fact was one of the intended reasons for having it placed there initially.

2.4 Condom Presence in the Rooms

Since the health inspectors that were doing the inventory of the existing stickers had to walk into the rooms, they were asked to verify whether they found any condoms or not, and how many. In this manner we could detect the level of compliance of the establishment to have two condoms in each room according to the MOH's rule. The panorama found was encouraging.

TABLE 6
 PRESENCE OF CONDOMS IN HOTEL/MOTEL ROOMS

Total Motel/Hotel Room Visited: 36
 No. of Rooms: 718

Rooms with Condoms:		%
1 Condom	42	7
2 Condoms	432	60
3 Condoms	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>
	492	69%
 Rooms without Condoms:	 <u>226</u>	 <u>31%</u>
Total amount of rooms	718	100%

A high 68% of all the rooms visited had condoms, and of these, the majority, 60%, had two condoms. Thus the results show that the constant visits to these establishments have paid off.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- Even though there is a low existence of the condom instructional sticker, both in the large or small versions, a non-negligible amount were found still stuck on the walls of the sex hotel and motel rooms where the program personnel had placed them.
- The low number of stickers still present in the rooms does not mean low number of male clients having seen them. On the contrary, the majority of the potential clients interviewed said having seen one of the stickers at one point in time stuck on the walls of the hotel-motel rooms.

- Having seen them stuck on the wall did not bother them much, on the contrary, the majority found it to be useful as knowledge review, attitude support for condom use, reminder of the AIDS danger.
- If the majority of the clients did not dislike seeing the sticker on the wall, then probably it has been ripped off more often by the administrators. The program should maintain a permanent stick-on process.
- The paper version of the instructional condom sticker was also seen by many of the clients interviewed; they had found it useful and almost half had taken it.
- Over half of the rooms had two condoms as implied by the MOH decree.