

RAP* Time



RURAL CENTER *for* AIDS/STD PREVENTION

A JOINT PROJECT OF
INDIANA UNIVERSITY & PURDUE UNIVERSITY

*Rural AIDS/STD prevention. rap (rap) v. Slang. To talk freely and openly.

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Drug-Dependent and Incarcerated Youth Have Exceedingly High HIV-Risk Behavior

Nearly one-fifth of all AIDS cases reported in 1997 were among persons 20-29 years of age. Given a 10 year incubation period from HIV infection to AIDS, most of these persons became infected during adolescence. One-quarter of all sexually transmitted diseases in the United States are diagnosed among adolescents, especially racial and ethnic minorities.

Adolescents at elevated risk for HIV/STD were assessed for knowledge and attitudes toward precautionary behavior, frequencies of high risk sexual and substance abuse behaviors, and other psychosocial factors such as impulsivity, risk-taking propensity, and social support.

Methodology

The study sample included drug-dependent adolescents ($n = 77$), incarcerated youth ($n = 194$), homeless and runaway youth ($n = 55$), and urban African-American adolescents ($n = 156$).

The study was conducted in a southern city with a population of approximately 400,000 persons. At the time the research occurred, this state had the nation's highest rates of teen

pregnancy, teen births, syphilis, and gonorrhea.

Outcomes of the Study

Major findings include:

- Drug-dependent and incarcerated youth evidenced exceedingly high HIV-risk and less favorable psychosocial profiles, with drug-dependent females reporting the highest levels of overall risk.
- Drug-dependent youth had a consistently higher degree of HIV-risk than the incarcerated youth. This group had significantly higher AIDS knowledge scores than any other group, which supports theories positing a minimal role of knowledge in relationship to HIV-risk behavior.
- Youth in homeless shelters were lower in HIV-risk and had more favorable psychosocial profiles than drug-dependent and incarcerated youth and were slightly higher on these measures than African-American youth sampled from the community.
- Few differences in psychosocial measures were found between youth in the community and youth in shelters, with each

group being high in measures believed to foster risk-reducing behavior.

- Youth from the community reported the greatest proportion of condom-protected intercourse, with the lowest frequency of unprotected and vaginal and oral sex, and the fewest number of sex partners in the past three months.

Implications for Prevention

HIV prevention intervention programs for high-risk youth should not be identical. Drug-dependent youth and incarcerated youth have different HIV prevention needs than youth from homeless shelters or youth from the community, with the former being at greater risk than the latter. Gender differences must likewise be considered, regardless of the venue for the educational intervention.

SOURCE: St. Lawrence, J. S., Crosby, R. A., & O'Bannon, R. (1999). Adolescent risk for HIV infection: Comparison of four high risk samples. *Journal of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Education for Adolescents & Children*, 3(3), 63-86.

Parental Discussions Associated with Less Risky Teen Sex

Researchers have focused on two primary social influences of teen sexual behavior: parents and peers. This study tested the hypothesis that parent-adolescent sexual communication will reduce the impact of peer norms on adolescents' sexual behavior using two different types of behavior: sexual activity and condom use.

The sample was 907 adolescents who participated in the Family and Adolescent Risk Behavior and Communication Study, a study of adolescents and mothers in Alabama, New York, and Puerto Rico.

The study found that parental discussions were associated with less risky sexual behaviors, less conformity to peer norms, and a greater belief that parents provide the most useful information about sex. Results suggest that a lack of communication may cause adolescents to turn to peers and that peers may influence their behavior.

SOURCE: Whitaker, D. J., & Miller, K. S. (2000). Parent-adolescent discussions about sex and condoms: Impact of peer influences of sexual risk behavior. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 15*, 251-273.

Viral Shedding Found Among Persons with Asymptomatic HSV-2

Most persons who have serologic evidence of infection with herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2) are asymptomatic. These persons were thought to have less frequent viral reactivation than those with symptomatic infection.

A prospective study investigated genital shedding of HSV among 53 subjects who had antibodies to HSV-2, but who reported no history of genital herpes. The shedding of these persons was compared to patterns of viral shedding of a similar cohort of 90 subjects with symptomatic HSV-2 infection.

HSV was isolated from the genital mucosa in 38 of the 53 HSV-2 seropositive subjects (72%) who reported no history of genital herpes and HSV DNA was detected in cultures from genital mucosal swabs of 6 more subjects.

The study concluded that seropositivity for HSV-2 is associated with viral shedding in the genital tract, even in subjects with no reported history of genital herpes.

SOURCE: Wald, A., et al. (2000). Reactivation of genital herpes virus type 2 infection in asymptomatic seropositive persons. *The New England Journal of Medicine, 342*, 844-850.

Heterosexual HIV Transmission Greater With Higher Viral Load

Discordant couples (N=415) in Uganda were followed for 30 months. A strong correlation between increased serum HIV-1 RNA levels and a greater risk for transmission of HIV-1 was found. HIV transmission was uncommon in persons with levels below 1,500 copies of HIV-1 RNA per milliliter.

SOURCE: Quinn, T. C., et al. (2000). Viral load and heterosexual transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Type 1. *New England Journal of Medicine, 342*, 921-929.

Most Rural 10th Graders Used Condoms

Data from a HIV education intervention study in the rural south found that 50% of the participating sexually active teens used condoms consistently at the pretest. Sixty five percent used a condom at the last intercourse.

SOURCE: Smith, M. U., et al. (2000). Students together against negative decisions (STAND): Evaluation of a school-based sexual risk reduction intervention in the rural South. *AIDS Education and Prevention, 12*, 49-70. ○



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