

RAP* Time



RURAL CENTER *for* AIDS/STD PREVENTION

A JOINT PROJECT OF
INDIANA UNIVERSITY, PURDUE UNIVERSITY,
and UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

*Rural AIDS/STD prevention. rap (rap) v. *Slang*. To talk freely and openly. Vol. 8, No. 10, October 1, 2004

Female adolescents in high risk social networks report greater risk behavior

Adolescents are at greatest risk for sexually transmitted diseases. About 62% of all STD cases are among people under the age of 25. Numerous studies have examined attitudinal and behavioral characteristics that contribute to high STD risk among adolescents. However, because of the severity of the STD problem among young people, further studies are warranted, particularly among female youth.

This study was designed to determine if risk perception, condom use, and STD prevalence differ according to sexual network.

Methodology

303 adolescent females from two clinics in San Francisco participated in a study of STD risk perception and condom use and were categorized as "core," "bridge, and "periphery" in sexual network.

Core is the inner circle of the network with the highest risk and highest incidence of disease. Bridge, located between core and periphery, has a higher incidence than periphery but less than core. Periphery has the lowest risk for disease and lowest disease incidence. Theoretically, the degree to which these groups intermingal

represent the degree to which STDs spread throughout the population.

Outcomes of the Study

303 females, ages 14-19, reported sex with a main partner at their 6-month visit and were included in the analysis. 85 were core, 182 were bridge, and 36 were periphery. Race/ethnicity of each group was diverse including Caucasian, African American, Latino, and Asian. 19 cases of gonorrhea and chlamydia were diagnosed at the 6-month visit. Major findings include:

- Core members and their partners exhibited 4 times the illicit drug use and 3 times the number of concurrent sex partners when compared to the bridge group.
- Injection drug use ranged from 5% among core to 0% among bridge and periphery.
- Illicit drug use was 55% among core, 31% among bridge and 9% among periphery.
- 68% of core members had a concurrent sex partner, with 55% of bridge and 8% of periphery, respectively, having concurrent sex partners.
- 6% of core reported binge drinking with 0% of bridge and periphery reporting binge drinking.

- Core had a greater number of lifetime sex partners (mean = 6.6) than bridge (mean = 3.6) and periphery (mean = 3.1).
- Mean age of first intercourse was 14 for core and 15 for bridge and periphery.
- Core and bridge were more likely to have lower risk perceptions than periphery.
- Regardless of network location, participants with higher risk perception were more likely to use condom at last sex than those perceiving low risk.

Implications for Prevention

Adolescent females in the social network with the highest STD incidence had the greatest risk behavior. Participants with the lowest risk perception had the highest risk behavior. Interventions should be designed to increase risk perception, especially among those with greatest risk of sexually transmitted disease.

SOURCE:

Bettinger, J. A., et al. (2004). Risk perceptions, condom use, and sexually transmitted diseases among adolescent females according to social network position. *Sexually transmitted diseases*, 31, 575-579.