

R A P* Time



RURAL CENTER *for* AIDS/STD PREVENTION

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*Rural AIDS/STD prevention. rap (rap) v. *Slang*. To talk freely and openly. Vol. 9, No. 11, November 4, 2005

Drinking alcohol decreased condom use, but only with casual partners

Many college students are sexually active, with many reporting having more than one partner. Alcohol consumption is a common norm on many college campuses. In many instances, the alcohol use becomes problematic. Risky sex may covary with drinking, leading to greater HIV/STD risk.

Event-level studies of alcohol use and risky sexual behaviors have found mixed results, suggesting that the relationship between risky sex and alcohol use may depend on sexual partner type and sexual event context. This study assessed the impact of alcohol consumption on condom use.

Methodology

The influence of alcohol consumption (number of drinks consumed prior to sex event/binge drinking prior to the sexual event) on the decision to use a condom in over 1,538 sex events was investigated in a high risk sample of male college students.

Researchers also examined the influence of partner type and sex-related alcohol expectancies as likely moderators of condom use in sex events involving alcohol consumption. 93 sexually active heterosexual college males com-

pleted a questionnaire and were interviewed.

Outcomes of the Study

Average age was 21 years and participants drank an average of 3.4 times a week, consuming an average of 6.3 drinks per drinking occasion. They averaged 3.2 sexual partners in last three months with a mean condom use of 59% during sex. 69% were Caucasian, 18% were Hispanic, 10% were Asian American, and 3% were African American.

Major findings include:

- The type of partner, alcohol consumption, alcohol expectancies, and condom use all covaried.
- The men consumed significantly more alcohol with new partners, followed by casual partners, and then by regular partners.
- The men were more likely to use condoms with new partners than with casual or regular partners.
- Drinking alcohol decreased condom use, but only with casual partners. While 72% of casual partner sex events where no drinking occurred involved condom use, only 56% of similar events after drinking involved condom use.
- Expectations about alcohol's disinhibiting sexual effects de-

creased condom use.

- Drinking prior to sex was associated with reduced condom use.
- A few previous sexual experiences with a partner seem to create a false sense of security against STDs.
- Non-Republican party affiliation, younger age and condom use within the prior five years were each associated with having positive opinions on many items.

Implications for Prevention

The findings support contentions that alcohol consumption decreases safer sex with casual partners but not with new partners. Encouraging men to treat casual partners as new partners may promote safer-sex behaviors. Improving HIV/STD transmission knowledge with casual partners and challenging expectations of alcohol as sexual disinhibitor may help reduce the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

SOURCE:

LaBrie, J., et al. (2005). Effects of alcohol, expectancies, and partner type on condom use in college males: Event-level analysis. *Journal of Sex Research*, 42, 259-266.

Sexual risk found to be related to having sexual difficulties

This study investigated the relationship of sexual risk variables to sexual health. The sample was 163 low-income African American women.

The Sexual Health Model was used to measure sexual barriers to healthy sexuality, sexual anatomy and functioning, positive sexuality, sexual health care, and cultural identity. Measures of risky sexual behavior were consistent condom use, multiple concurrent partnerships, and sexual risk.

No significant relationships were found between acculturation and risky sexual behaviors. Having sexual difficulties was positively associated with overall sexual risk and multiple concurrent partnerships. Favorable attitudes toward condoms were positively associated with condom use. Desiring or intending pregnancy was positively associated with inconsistent condom use and overall sexual risk behavior.

The findings reveal the importance of sexuality, relationships and HIV prevention.

SOURCE: Robinson, B. E., et al. (2005). Risky sexual behavior in low-income African American women: The impact of sexual health variables. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 42, 224-237.

Increase in risk behavior in MSM reported after September 11

Research on the mental health effects of terrorist attacks have been published, but none on changes in sexual behavior. This study examined the impact of the September 11 attacks on sexual and drug and alcohol use behaviors of men who have sex with men. 2,915 MSM from all 50 U.S. states completed an anonymous Internet survey.

Of the sample, 11% lost a friend/relative, 5% witnessed the attacks in person, and nearly all saw the attacks on TV within one hour.

Nearly equal proportions of men reported increases and decreases in number of sexual partners following September 11. Small, but significant increases in unprotected anal intercourse and alcohol use, but not illicit drug use was found. Men who lost a friend or relative in the attacks were more likely to report unprotected anal intercourse, an increase in number of sex partners, and increase in alcohol use.

Attention to sexual risk and substance abuse should be important components of counseling following trauma-related events.

SOURCE: Chiasson, M A., et al. (2005). Increased high risk sexual behavior after September 11 in men who have sex with men: An Internet survey. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 34, 527-535.

No association found between early syphilis and CD4 counts

This study examined the effect of early syphilis on blood and semen plasma HIV-1 viral loads and CD4 counts among cases of early syphilis in HIV-1 infected patients in the United Kingdom. The data demonstrated that early syphilis has little, if any, effect on blood or semen plasma HIV-1 RNA loads and no overall effect on CD4 count. Early latent syphilis may be associated with lower CD4 counts.

SOURCE: Sadiq, S. T., et al. (2005). The effects of early syphilis on CD4 counts and the HIV-1 RNA viral loads in blood and semen. *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 81, 380-385.

Obesity more common than wasting

In this study of 1689 HIV+ patients, obesity was more common than wasting, but not more common than the general population. Women, particularly African American women, were at particular risk for obesity.

SOURCE: Amorosa, V., et al. (2005). A tale of 2 epidemics: The intersection between obesity and HIV infection in HIV infection in Philadelphia. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, 39, 557-561.

RAP Time is a monthly AIDS/STD prevention bulletin published by the Rural Center for AIDS/STD Prevention (RCAP) at Indiana University, Bloomington. RCAP is a joint project of Indiana University, Purdue University and the University of Colorado. The major focus of RCAP is the promotion of HIV/STD prevention in rural America, with the goal of reducing HIV/STD incidence.

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the cooperating universities.

Senior Director
William L. Yarber, H.S.D.
 Indiana University, Bloomington

Co-Directors
James G. Anderson, Ph.D.
 Purdue University, West Lafayette
Janet N. Arno, M.D.
 IU School of Medicine, Indianapolis
Stephen R. Byrn Ph.D.
 Purdue University, West Lafayette
Susan I. Driesback, Ph.D.
 University of Colorado, Denver
Mohammad R. Torabi, Ph.D.
 Indiana University, Bloomington

Rural Center for AIDS/STD Prevention
 Indiana University
 801 East Seventh Street
 Bloomington, Indiana
 47405-3085

Phone, Fax, E-mail, web page:
 Voice and TDD: (812) 855-1718
 (800) 566-8644
 FAX line: (812) 855-3717
 aids@indiana.edu
 http://www.indiana.edu/~aids