

# RAP\* Time



## RURAL CENTER *for* AIDS/STD PREVENTION

A JOINT PROJECT OF  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO,  
AND UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

\*Rural AIDS/STD prevention. rap (rap) v. *Slang*. To talk freely and openly. Vol. 10, No. 3, March 3, 2006

## Most persons with genital herpes practice safe sex during symptomatic periods

Genital herpes (GH) is one of the most common STDs. Painful and recurrent genital lesions characterize GH, but often the symptoms are not easily recognized. Transmission is most efficient when lesions are clinically apparent, but the majority of HSV-2 transmission occurs during asymptomatic periods. To reduce risk, it is important to expand knowledge of sexual risk of persons infection with genital herpes.

The study describes the differences in sexual behavior in individuals with genital herpes during “symptomatic” and “asymptomatic” periods of the disease.

### Methodology

During 1998 to 2001 a questionnaire was undertaken by 1193 persons infected with HSV-2 and self identified with having a history of symptomatic GH during screening for a worldwide, multicentre, randomized trial of valaciclovir for the prevention of HSV-2 transmission in heterosexual, monogamous couples. 35% of partners were HSV-2 seropositive.

The self-completed questionnaire had three main sections:

demographic and behavioral factors, and knowledge of GH.

### Outcomes of the Study

Sixty percent and forty percent of females and males, respectively, had a history of GH. Median age for females was 36 years and 33 years for males. 88% were white, and over half had a college level education. The median recurrences of GH per year was five.

Major findings include:

- Sexual activity (vaginal, oral and anal intercourse) during asymptomatic and symptomatic periods of GH was 98% and 40%, respectively.
- Always using a condom during asymptomatic and symptomatic periods was 20% and 35%, respectively.
- The proportion who either abstained from vaginal intercourse or “always” used condoms was 21% vs 74% for asymptomatic vs symptomatic periods.
- Factors associated with intercourse during symptomatic periods of GH included current intrauterine device use, living in Latin America or Europe compared to North America, previous STD, a higher number of sexual episodes per month, and a

higher number of GH recurrences per year.

- Understanding of GH and higher education was associated with least risk behavior.
- Longer relationships were associated with engaging in unprotected vaginal sex during symptomatic periods compared to those protecting themselves during both symptomatic and asymptomatic stages.

### Implications for Prevention

The study found that most participants with genital herpes either abstained from intercourse or always used condoms during symptomatic periods of genital herpes. However, condom use during asymptomatic periods was relatively low compared to symptomatic periods.

Further prevention education is needed for persons infected with genital herpes, particularly stressing risk reduction during symptomatic periods.

### SOURCE:

Rana, R.K., et al., (2006). Sexual behavior and condom use among individuals with a history of symptomatic genital herpes *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 82, 69-74.

## Correlates of intended sexual abstinence identified

This study utilized the Information-Motivation-Behavior model to examine correlates of intention to remain sexually inactive among Hispanic and black high school students in Los Angeles.

Half indicated that they plan to remain sexually abstinent until they graduate from high school. About one in five rejected the notion of remaining abstinent, and three of ten were uncertain about their intention. Male and African American students were less likely than their female and Latino counterparts to report intention to remain sexually inactive.

Students less likely to claim to remain sexually inactive had (1) higher perceived peer pressure, (2) less skills for avoiding sexual activity, (3) a more positive attitude about safe sex, and (4) lower level of perceived pregnancy repercussions.

Educational efforts should focus on reducing peer pressure and building self-efficacy by enhancing motivation and skills.

SOURCE: Bazargan, M., & West, K. (2006). Correlates of the intention to remain sexually active among underserved Hispanic and African American high school students. *Journal of School Health*, 76, 25-31.

## Rural detained youth more likely to be tested for HIV

Voluntary HIV testing and counseling can reduce HIV risk behaviors. Detained youth are disproportionately infected with HIV compared to other adolescent groups.

Data was collected from 467 detained youth in Georgia to explore differences between those ever tested for HIV and those never tested prior to being detained.

For the total sample and for males, those living in a rural areas were more likely to be tested for HIV. 85% of rural youth, compared to 57% of non-rural youth reported ever having an HIV test. Testing was more likely among females (72%) than males (47%).

Among the overall sample, testing was more prevalent among youth (1) having school-based sex education, (2) ever causing a pregnancy or ever being pregnant, (3) ever having an STD, and (4) recently having sex with a partner high on drugs.

The study suggests that a significant number of detained adolescents, especially males, engage in risky sexual behavior but have never been tested for HIV.

SOURCE: Voisin, D. R., et al. (2004). HIV testing among detained youth. *Journal of HIV/AIDS Prevention in Children and Youth*, 6, 83-96.

## HIV/AIDS disproportionately impacted blacks, 2001-2004

During 2001-2004, in nearly every demographic and transmission category, the largest percentages of HIV/AIDS cases were among blacks. Disparities occurred in all groups, but especially among women, children, and persons with high-risk heterosexual behavior. Blacks accounted for the highest percentages and rates of cases for both males and females in the high-risk heterosexual transmission category and for most cases attributed to perinatal transmission.

SOURCE: CDC. (2006). Racial/ethnic disparities in diagnoses of HIV/AIDS -- 33 states, 2001-2004. *MMWR*, 55(05), 121-125.

## STD microbicides are biologically plausible

A review of publications on STD microbicides reveal that more than 15 candidates are currently studied in clinical trials. Several factors have delayed the development of a safe and effective microbicide, although the reviewers state that a microbicide is biologically plausible.

SOURCE: Dhawan, D., & Mayer, K. H. (2006). Microbicides to prevent HIV transmission: Overcoming obstacles to chemical barrier protection. *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 193, 36-44.

**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, University of Colorado, and the University of Kentucky. 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.

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