

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.

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New sexual partners often found within infectious periods of several STIs

STI transmission occurs only during a finite infectious period following acquisition. If the disease is to persist, effective contact with a susceptible individual must take place during that infectious period. The length of time (“gap”) between the end of an individual’s partnership with one sexual partner and the start of their next sexual relationship is an important determinant of STI transmission.

The study assessed the gaps, lengths, and overlaps between sexual relationships among persons reporting ever engaging in sex.

Methodology

Participants were identified in a random-digit dial survey conducted in the Seattle area between 2003 and 2004 among residents age 18 to 39 years of age with fluency in the English language. The telephone survey required about 20 minutes to complete.

The survey instrument included questions on sexual history, partner and partnership characteristics of the five recent partnerships, STI history and demographics. Sexual activity was defined as oral, vagina, or anal intercourse.

Analysis was limited to 1051 participants (88% of 1194 residents

contacted) who reported the ever engaging in the defined sexual behaviors and who reported information on relationship gaps, lengths, and overlaps.

Outcomes of the Study

38% reported 5 or fewer sexual partners during their lifetime and 15% reported having 20 or more partners.

Major findings include:

- Most (59%) of the gaps between partnerships were 6 months or less. Hence, most of this population seeking new partners did so well within the infectious period of chlamydial infections, gonorrhea, and syphilis (if not treated) and HSV, HPV, and HIV infection. This was true independent of gender, race, income or education.
- Participants often reported several sex partners of short duration at the beginning or end of a longer relationship. Some reported sex partnerships of short duration during a longer relationship or an overlap between the end of one long partnership and beginning of another.
- About 25% of the relationships were succeeded by another

overlapping sexual relationship.

- Participants reported that they had their first sexual experience at a lower age tended to have longer overlaps, but only among those of age less than 25. For those over 25 years, older participants tended to have longer relationships.

Implications for Prevention

Most of the gaps between sexual partnerships were about 6 months meaning that most of the 18- to 39-year-olds of this sample who sought new partners did so within the infectious period of sexual STIs.

Since the median time between partnerships made most serially monogamous partnerships concurrent relative to transmission of most STI, any STI introduced into a general population of 18- to 39-year-olds would not require any special circumstance to maintain circulation assuming little or no condom use.

SOURCE:

Foxman, B., et al. (2006). Measures of sexual partnerships: Lengths, gaps, overlaps, and sexually transmitted infection. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 33, 206-214.

Support for school condom use education remains high

This study identified Indiana public opinion about condom use for HIV prevention via a state-wide telephone probability surveys in 1993 (N=645), 1998 (N=491), and 2003 (N=496). Sixteen statements about condom availability and education in schools, and condom promotion and use were asked.

The proportion agreeing that Indiana public high schools should educate teenagers about how to use condoms to prevent HIV remained the same for the three periods at about 75%. At each testing period, at least six of every ten disagreed that promoting condoms is the same a promoting sex. About nine of every ten believed that if used properly, condoms are effective in preventing HIV transmission.

Opinions about if condoms should be available to teenagers in Indiana public high schools without parental permission was mixed at the three testing periods: about six of every ten agreed.

SOURCE: Torabi, M., Yarber, W., & Ifeng, J. (2006). Trends of Indiana public opinion about condom use for HIV prevention -- 1993, 1998, and 2003. *American Journal of Health Education*, 37, 78-86.

Douching common among high-risk population of black women

Vaginal douching has been linked to adverse reproductive health consequences such as PID, reduced fertility, ectopic pregnancy, and cervical cancer. This study determined douching patterns among black women seeking an STD evaluation at an urban, publicly funded STD clinic in southern region of the United States. Mean age was 25 years.

Of 891 women, 46.1% were current douchers. Common reasons for douching were to cleanse after menses (65.4%) and to feel fresh (42.2%). Frequent douching was associated with douching after sex, to alleviate an itch, and to feel fresh. More than half (58.2%) of those currently douching reported beginning douching at age 17 or older. Women who douched during menses and to alleviate an itch were more likely to have a current chlamydial infection.

The national prevalence of douching has declined since 1988 but many black women in the South continue to engage in this practice.

SOURCE: Annang, L., et al. (2006). Vaginal douche practices among black women at risk: Exploring prevalence, reasons for douching, and sexually transmitted disease infection. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 33, 215-219.

Circumcised men at lower risk for chancroid and syphilis

26 articles related to male circumcision and specific STI were located via electronic databases (1950-2004) and a review and meta-analysis were conducted. Most syphilis studies reported a substantially reduced risk among circumcised men. The reduced risk of HSV-2 infection was of borderline statistical significance. Circumcised men were at a lower risk of chancroid.

SOURCE: Weiss, H. A., et al. (2006). Male circumcision and risk of syphilis, chancroid, and genital herpes: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 82, 101-110.

Baby girls at higher risk for HIV infection

Mother-to-child transmission was studied among HIV-infected, untreated African women. Girls were at higher risk of early (in utero and perinatal) HIV infection than boys. The researchers propose a biological reason why girls might be at higher risk of mother-to-child HIV infection than boys.

SOURCE: Biggar, R. K., et al. (2006). Higher in utero and perinatal HIV infection risk in girls than boys. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, 41, 509-513.

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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
Janet N. Arno, M.D.
IU School of Medicine, Indianapolis
Richard A. Crosby, Ph.D.
University of Kentucky
Susan L. Driesbach, 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) 855-7974
(800) 566-8644
FAX line: (812) 855-3717
aids@indiana.edu
<http://www.indiana.edu/~aids>