



National HIV Prevention Conference

Atlanta, Georgia - Jun 12-15, 2005

[TITLE:] MANY MEN, MANY VOICES (3MV), A GROUP LEVEL INTERVENTION FOR BLACK GAY MEN

Natl HIV Prev Conf. 2005 Jun 12-15 (abstract no. M1-C1204)

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ISSUE: Black gay men are disproportionately experiencing the highest rates of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data from the New York City portion of the Young Men's Survey (1998 to 2000) demonstrates the urgent need to reach the Black gay men/MSM community, especially youth. In Phase II of the study, almost one-third of Black gay youth tested positive. Studies have also shown that the presence of STDs mitigates the acquisition and transmission of HIV. Effective interventions which meet the HIV prevention needs of this special population are a priority. Many existing interventions were developed primarily for white gay men. However, some factors influencing the risk behaviors of Black gay men are different including homophobia, racism, access to health care services, and lack of social support or a sense of community. Prevention interventions must address these issues and connect Black gay men to services, such as HIV counseling and testing, STD/STI screenings and other services.

SETTING: 3MV can be disseminated in community centers and clinics, and can be integrated with existing agencies providing group level intervention services to gay and bisexual men of color.

PROJECT: Many Men, Many Voices is a behavioral intervention designed to reduce HIV and STD risk practices among gay and bisexual men of color. 3MV is grounded in concepts derived from Social Cognitive Theory, with components that have been adapted from behavioral interventions that have demonstrated efficacy with Caucasian men who have sex with men. The intervention is administered to small groups that meet for 6 two-hour sessions or in a 3 day retreat. Each of the 3MV sessions include activities and group discussions that address social roles, homophobia, and racial/sexual identity as they may impact sexual practices.

RESULTS: Among all of the behavioral interventions that were designed to reduce risk for HIV and STDs, skills building small group intervention approaches that provide risk education, risk sensitization, and risk reduction and communication skills have demonstrated the most evidence for effectively changing sexual risk behaviors. 3MV is based on scientifically sound principles of behavior change, with all of the components found in effective interventions and redesigned to fit the personal and social lives of gay and bisexual men of color. Research has shown that embedding intervention elements in personally relevant contexts increases the potential for positive outcomes (Fisher & Fisher, 1992). A KABB (Knowledge, Attitude, Behavior, and Belief) instrument specific to the intervention and population has been developed, tested, and implemented in 3MV sessions. A CDC-funded comprehensive evaluation is currently underway.

LESSONS LEARNED: Research has shown that culturally competent skills building group interventions can result in increased condom use, reductions in high-risk behaviors, and reduced numbers of sex partners. A key feature of 3MV is its adaptation to fit the personal and cultural relevance of the targeted community.



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050612
M1-C1204

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