

Sister to Sister HIV Risk-Reduction Intervention: Reducing HIV Incidence Among High-Risk African-American Women

The Challenge:

African-American women suffer disproportionately high rates of several sexually-transmitted diseases. They also have an elevated incidence of HIV/AIDS, a disease often transmitted to women through heterosexual contact and the leading cause of death among African-American women ages 25-34.

The Goal:

Help at-risk women learn and use important lessons about avoiding sexually-transmitted diseases and reduce their frequency of actually contracting those diseases.

An Innovative Solution:

Gain an understanding of the behaviors that may create health risks and, by providing intensive, culturally-sensitive health information, educate and empower at-risk women to help reduce their risk for these diseases.

What It Is

- An evidence-based, 20-minute one-on-one skill-building HIV risk-reduction intervention program that is culturally sensitive, theory driven, gender specific and appropriate for integration into primary care clinical practices by nurses and other health care providers. To date, the program is being provided to woman at clinics in inner-city Newark, NJ, and Philadelphia, and in rural North Carolina.
- Based on an initial study, “The Black Women’s Health Project:” AIDS & Black Women: Testing Risk Behavior Intervention,” funded by the National Institute for Nursing Research.

What It Does

- The session stresses the importance of using condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases. It is designed to:
 - Increase knowledge of HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases;
 - Strengthen behavioral beliefs regarding the ability of condom use to prevent disease;
 - Enhance hedonistic beliefs regarding effects of condom use on sexual enjoyment;
 - Increase communication skills and condom use skills; and
 - Build pride, confidence, and self-efficacy so the women can negotiate condom use with their sexual partners.
- The intervention is highly structured and implemented by nurses using intervention manuals. It is educational, engaging, and gender-appropriate and involves videos, brainstorming, experiential exercises, and skill-building activities. Services are provided by specially-trained nurses either individually or in small group sessions.

Where To Learn More

Loretta Sweet Jemmott, PhD, RN,
FAAN
Professor & Principal Investigator
University of Pennsylvania,
School of Nursing
420 Guardian Drive
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6096
(215) 898-8287
jemmott@nursing.upenn.edu

Jillian Lucas Baker, EdM
Project Director
University of Pennsylvania,
School of Nursing
420 Guardian Drive
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6096
(215) 898-6373

- The program includes:
 - Educational workshops
 - Small group or one-on-one discussions
 - Role plays
 - Films and videos
 - Fun and interactive activities
- The program grew out of the need for an HIV risk-reduction intervention for nurses to implement with their clients who were at high risk for HIV infection. It was designed and evaluated by a nurse and originally implemented by 27 specially trained African American nurses in a primary care clinic.

How It Stands Out

- Has improved the self-reported protective behaviors of women involved for up to one year and actually decreased their risk of acquiring a sexually-transmitted disease.
- The intervention's design was based on focus group sessions with nurses across New Jersey to determine the needs, issues and concerns for nurses who work with African American women in clinical settings. In addition, several focus groups were conducted with women from the study population to determine their needs and concerns for strategies to reduce their risk for HIV infection.
- Women, who received the skill-building program, either individually or in a group, report a higher proportion of condom use during sexual intercourse and are more likely to report using a condom during their most recent sexual episode than women who received information only.
- Women who learn skills in the program are less likely to test positive for an STD.
- The interventions have been especially effective in reducing risky sexual behavior in conjunction with alcohol and drug use (i.e. women reported fewer days on which they had sex while under the influence and fewer days of unprotected sex while under the influence compared to the control group over the entire follow-up period).