

Roll-out of proven HIV/STD risk-reduction intervention with teens by community groups successful

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An approach designed to reduce HIV/STDs previously used exclusively by academic researchers has successfully been implemented by community-based organizations (CBOs), an important component in national strategies to curtail the spread of HIV, meaning far more "at risk" youths can be reached.

A new study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania tested whether a proven HIV/STD risk-reduction [intervention](#) would work when led by CBOs, who have played a vital role in the ongoing fight against HIV. The Penn study found that the CBOs were able to successfully implement an evidence-based HIV/STD risk-reduction intervention with adolescents. The intervention did not reduce the frequency of [sexual intercourse](#), yet the HIV/STD-intervention participants reported a greater proportion of condom-protected intercourse.

The study also looked at the impact of extended training and found that CBO facilitators who received more training were no more effective than those who received a basic intervention packet alone. Results suggest that the training of CBO facilitators does not need to be "extraordinarily extensive or expensive" to achieve desired results, according to researchers.

"Community-based organizations have been on the front lines of the

HIV/AIDS fight since the beginning of the epidemic, and this study shows their ability to successfully apply interventions designed to prevent STD transmission in a vulnerable population," said study author John B. Jemmott III, PhD, professor of Communication in Psychiatry and of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine and Annenberg School for Communication.

In the United States, young adults between 15 and 24 years old only constitute one quarter of the sexually active population, yet they account for about half of new STD cases. The same age group accounts for half of all new HIV infections.

Interventions were led by 86 community-based organizations with a total of 1707 adolescent participants divided into a control group and an HIV/[STD](#) risk-reduction group. The intervention was designed to give adolescents the knowledge, motivation and skills necessary to reduce their risk of STDs, including HIV. The teens reported in three, six, and 12 months following the intervention. Throughout the study, the [HIV](#) /STD-intervention participants were more likely to report consistent condom use than the control group.

"We were pleased to find that effective interventions can retain their beneficial effects when implemented by CBOs outside of tightly controlled research settings," Loretta S. Jemmott, PhD, RN, professor of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, "This has important implications for ways that future interventions can be rolled out."

The study appears in the April edition of the *American Journal of Public Health*. Additional authors include Geoffrey T. Fong, PhD, with the Psychology Department at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and Knashawn Morales, ScD, assistant professor of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania School

of Medicine. The study was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health.

Provided by University of Pennsylvania

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