HIV Prevention and Transmission Myths Among Heterosexually Active Adults in Low-Income Areas of South Florida

Dano W. Beck • Marlene LaLota • Lisa R. Metsch • Gabriel A. Cardenas • David W. Forrest • Spencer Lieb • Thomas M. Liberti

Abstract: Misconceptions about HIV transmission and prevention may inhibit individuals’ accurate assessment of their level of risk. We used venue-based sampling to conduct a cross-sectional study of heterosexually active adults (N = 1,221) within areas exhibiting high poverty and HIV/ AIDS rates in Miami-Dade and Broward counties in 2007. Two logistic regression analyses identified correlates of holding inaccurate beliefs about HIV transmission and pre- vention. Belief in incorrect HIV prevention methods (27.2%) and modes of transmission (38.5%) was common. Having at least one incorrect prevention belief was associated with being Hispanic compared to white (non-Hispanic), being depressed, and not knowing one’s HIV status. Having at least one incorrect transmission belief was associated with being younger, heavy alcohol use, being depressed, not having seen a physician in the past 12 months, and not knowing one’s HIV status. Among low-income heterosexuals, HIV prevention and transmission myths are widespread. Debunking them could have HIV prevention value.

Keywords HIV 􏰀 Prevention 􏰀 Myths 􏰀 Misconceptions 􏰀 Beliefs 􏰀 HIV status

**Sexual Risk, Substance Use and Undiagnosed Seropositivity among Men Who Have Sex with Men and Women in Miami, Florida**

**David W. Forrest, PhD, Gabriel Cardenas, MPH, Lisa R. Metsch, PhD, Charlene S. Dodson, MPH, Marlene LaLota, MPH**

*This paper utilizes the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance data in Miami for the men who have sex with men cycle (NHBS-MSM2) in 2008. We analyzed sexual risk, substance use and undiagnosed seropositivity in a diverse sample of men who have sex with men and women (MSMW) and compared them with MSM. Of 152 MSMW, 15.1% tested HIV positive with 73.9% previously undiagnosed. Almost half (44.1%) of the MSMW reported unprotected sex with male and female partners in the past year. More MSMW than MSM had undiagnosed HIV infection, exchanged sex for money or drugs, used crack and cocaine, been high during sex, and had not received HIV treatment if HIV positive. Undiagnosed HIV infection among MSMW was associated with Black race, older age, non-alcohol use and Ecstasy use. Our findings indicate that MSMW represent a unique population at risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV in Miami.*

Crystal Methamphetamine Use and Sexual Risk Behaviors among HIV-Positive and HIV-Negative Men Who Have Sex with Men in South Florida

David W. Forrest, Lisa R. Metsch, Marlene LaLota, Gabriel Cardenas, Dano W. Beck, and Yves Jeanty

**ABSTRACT** Using data collected through venue-based sampling in South Florida from 2004 to 2005 as part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded National HIV Behavioral Surveillance Among Men Who Have Sex with Men, we estimate the prevalence of crystal methamphetamine use and its association with high- risk sexual behaviors among a large and diverse sample of men who have sex with men (MSM) residing in South Florida. We also examine how these associations differ between HIV-positive and HIV-negative men. Bivariate analyses were used to assess the characteristics of study participants and their sexual risk behaviors by drug use and self- reported HIV status group. Of 946 MSM participants in South Florida, 18% reported crystal methamphetamine use in the past 12 months. Regardless of self-reported HIV status, crystal methamphetamine users were more likely to report high-risk sexual behaviors, an increased number of non-main sex partners, and being high on drugs and/ or alcohol at last sex act with a non-main partner. Our findings indicate that crystal methamphetamine use is prevalent among the MSM population in South Florida, and this prevalence rate is similar, if not higher, than that found in US cities that have been long recognized for having a high rate of crystal methamphetamine use among their MSM populations. Notably, the use of crystal methamphetamine among both HIV- positive and HIV-negative MSM is associated with increased HIV-related risk behaviors.

HIV Seropositivity and Correlates of Infection Among Heterosexually Active Adults in High-Risk Areas in South Florida

Marlene LaLota • Dano W. Beck • Lisa R. Metsch • Toye H. Brewer • David W. Forrest • Gabriel A. Cardenas • Thomas M. Liberti

The U.S. HIV/AIDS epidemic disproportionately impacts lower-income populations. We conducted a cross- sectional study of heterosexually active adults (N = 1076) in areas with high poverty and HIV/AIDS rates in South Florida in 2007. Using venue-based sampling, anonymous interviews and HIV tests were conducted at randomly selected venues (primarily retail businesses not associated with risk behav- iors). The sample’s HIV infection rate was 7.1%. Half (52.2%) of the infections were previously undiagnosed. Our findings underscore the impact of social and environmental factors on HIV risk, as well as the need to increase and optimize HIV testing and other prevention services.