

## Strengthening Capacity to Deliver HIV Research Counseling and Testing in International Biomedical Prevention and Treatment Trials

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### Project Description

In this project we will develop, pilot and evaluate a curriculum for improving HIV research counseling and testing (HRCT) skills among staff working in international prevention and treatment clinical trials. Guided by an assessment of acceptability and feasibility among clinicians and counselors, we are developing a novel self-directed learning (SDL) curriculum including a DVD/e-Learning approach and an enhanced component for training supervisors to support on-going HRCT (train the mentors or TOM).

The SDL curriculum and the TOM will be piloted with a sample of trial sites in Peru and South Africa. To measure the relative effectiveness of the two training conditions (SDL alone and SDL plus TOM and supervisor support) we will use an on-line tool able to detect changes in trainee knowledge and competency to conduct risk reduction counseling before and after the training.

### Significance

There is a critical need to develop safe and effective HIV prevention methods in the face of a burgeoning pandemic infecting 11,000 individuals daily across the globe. Approaches such as vaccines, microbicides, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), HSV-2 suppression and others are being evaluated in a number of federally-sponsored clinical trials, in addition to a host of therapeutic agents aimed at reducing the morbidity and mortality from HIV/AIDS. HRCT is a key component of biomedical prevention and treatment trials.

### Interesting Findings

- In a web-based needs assessment of trial staff including clinicians and counselors, we explored staff members self-rated skills to perform HRCT and assessed unmet training needs.
- Training should address core elements in risk assessment and reduction, particularly among clinician audiences.
- E-Learning, supplemented by on-site mentors for HRCT, may provide a sustainable model for future training in counseling across geographically dispersed HIV prevention and treatment trial sites.