A Qualitative Study of HIV Prevalence Patterns among Youth in Botswana

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Project Description

Three recent independent national datasets suggest that the rate of new HIV infections in Botswana appears to be declining, as evidenced by decreased prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-49. However, it is still uncertain why these declines have been observed and the extent to which behavioral changes (e.g., monogamy, condom use) have been causally associated with the decline.

The goal of this study is to use qualitative research methods to lend additional depth to existing surveillance data that suggest that HIV prevalence among young people in Botswana is declining. Focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews are conducted with

- Local youth service providers
- Youth between the ages of 18-24
- Adult key informants in three districts selected for regional diversity and variation of trends in HIV prevalence

By gathering information from young people and key informants who provide health-related services to young Batswana, we will gain valuable insight into the behavioral and contextual factors that may assist in explaining the observed decreases in HIV prevalence. Qualitative methods will allow us to explore the meanings and variations of the sexual experiences of young Batswana. This work may also lead to the development of innovative behavior change strategies to help support the decreased spread of HIV in Botswana.

Significance

Botswana has the second highest HIV prevalence rate in the world; approximately one quarter of the nation's population between the ages of 15-49 carry the virus. Data from the Botswana AIDS Impact Survey II and other surveillance results indicate that the rate of new HIV infections among young people is decreasing. However, data that describe why these trends have been observed do not currently exist. Our proposed qualitative study is a reasonable starting point to help close this knowledge gap.

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