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Mpowerment Project UCSF



The Mpowerment Project UCSF



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Research for Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Prevention



CAPS
CENTER FOR AIDS
PREVENTION STUDIES



Black Gay and Bisexual Men

We Are Family: Testing, Linkage and Engagement in Care among African American Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Youth in the House Ball Community

Investigators: Emily Arnold (PI), Parya Saberi, Susan Kegeles, Torsten Neilands, Lance Pollack, Michael Benjamin (CAL-PEP), Gloria Lockett (CAL-PEP)

This 4-year study was supported by the California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP) to develop and do a preliminary test of intervention activities that build upon forms of social support already occurring among young people involved in the house ball and gay family communities, specifically related to HIV prevention and care. This was a collaboration between UCSF, CAL-PEP, and members of the house ball and gay family communities.

Research findings: Many Bay Area houses, and gay families already share HIV prevention information and support with family members, helping their children and siblings connect to services. Building on family connections provides a natural forum to bring up the most recent prevention and treatment advances, such as home testing, PrEP/PEP, and U=U. Family-based support, reinforced by this intervention, is particularly important as many participants are impacted by gentrification and rely more on each other. Among the 120 participants enrolled in the study, 23% experienced homelessness in the past year. Connecting individuals to resources, within the community and through the health care system, is a key part of improving HIV prevention and care outcomes.

The Bruthas Project: Sexual Health Promotion Counseling Sessions

Investigators: Emily Arnold (Academic PI), Gloria Lockett (Community PI), Susan Kegeles, Don Operario (Brown University), Tor Neilands, Lance Pollack, and Stephanie Cornwell (CAL-PEP)

Black men who have sex with men and women (BMSMW) are at high risk for acquiring and transmitting HIV, but few interventions exist to address their prevention needs. To address this, we developed the Bruthas Project, a series of four individualized sexual health promotion counseling sessions designed to build upon standardized HIV counseling and testing (HIV-CT). Using a randomized controlled trial, intervention participants received Bruthas counseling sessions whereas the control participants received standard HIV testing and counseling.

Research findings: Men in both the intervention and control groups improved on their HIV testing behavior, engaged in fewer acts of condomless sex, and reduced their number of sexual partners. This may be attributed to the powerful effect of providing culturally tailored and non-judgmental HIV testing and counseling to BMSMW, an under serviced population. The study found that BMSMW who are living with HIV are prioritizing their basic needs, such as food security and housing, ahead of maintaining their medical provider appointments and medications. Some participants end their HIV medical treatment because of side effects or interactions with other medications.



Black Gay and Bisexual Men Continued

The LetSync Project: Creating a mHealth Tool for Enhancing HIV Care Engagement in the Dyadic Context

Investigators: Judy Tan (PI), Tor Neilands, Susan Kegeles, Parya Saberi, Emily Arnold

Black men who have sex with men are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS. The primary romantic relationship provides an important context for understanding HIV care engagement among MSM in a primary romantic relationship with another man. Relationship factors such as communication, relationship satisfaction, and social support have been shown to predict health outcomes, including those in the HIV Care Continuum.

Mobile health (mHealth) holds tremendous potential for facilitating relationship factors conducive to HIV care engagement among Black men who are in a primary romantic relationship with another man.

The goal of this project is to develop a couples-focused mHealth tool that enhances relationship factors important to HIV care engagement among HIV+ Black men who are in a primary romantic relationship with another man.

Substance Use

The PACE Study: Alcohol Consumption and Management Strategies Among Gay Bar Patrons in San Francisco and Oakland, CA

Investigators: Jessica Lin, Jen Hecht (San Francisco AIDS Foundation), Albert Plenty, Bob Siedle-Kahn, Sophia Zamudio-Haas, Alicia Ayala, Edwin Charlebois (PI)

Despite significant attention on gay men's substance use, much remains unknown about how environmental factors may contribute to gay men's elevated drinking patterns. We undertook a qualitative study of 51 gay bar patrons in San Francisco and Oakland, CA, to better understand the context of drinking motivations and management within the gay community in San Francisco and Oakland and to identify areas for potential interventions to encourage drinking moderation. Using a thematic analysis framework, a focus on drinking motivations and management strategies emerged as a recurring theme across interviews. Alcohol consumption and management strategies suggest that gay bar patrons experience encouragement from the individual, interpersonal, community, and structural levels to drink and that environmental and internal motivators for drinking often override participant's intentions and individualized strategies for moderation.

Our findings suggest an unmet need for assistance in helping men to create effective harm reduction strategies around drinking, as well as an opportunity for creating interventions that address community- and structural-level motivators for drinking and management.

Substance Use Continued

The PACE Study: Pacing Alcohol Consumption Experiment for Gay Bar Patrons in San Francisco

Investigators: Edwin Charlebois (PI), Albert Plenty, Jessica Lin, Alicia Ayala, Jennifer Hecht (San Francisco AIDS Foundation)

Research has shown that drinking alcohol is linked to unsafe sex, less safer sex negotiation, condom failure, and HIV risk. The literature suggest that gay bar patrons are an important group to reach out to for alcohol and HIV risk interventions. The PACE Study implemented and tested a multi-level structural intervention among a sample of gay bars in San Francisco consisting of: 1) increased availability of free water, 2) messaging on pacing alcohol use by drinking water, and 3) normative feedback of blood alcohol concentration (BAC%).

Research findings: Significant differences on objective and subjective measures of alcohol use were observed. 30% of intervention bar patrons had BAC% levels over the legal driving limit, compared to 43% of control bar patrons. 78% of intervention bar patrons were above the AUDIT-C cut-off for hazardous drinking compared to 87% in control bars.

Couples

PARTI: Optimizing PrEP Adherence in Sexual Minority Men Who Use Stimulants

Investigators: Adam Carrico (PI, University of Miami), Mallory Johnson (PI); Susanne Lewis (University of Miami), Steven Safren (University of Miami), Judith Moskowitz (Northwestern University), Monica Gandhi, Tor Neilands, Kimberly Page (University of New Mexico)

Stimulant use is a key obstacle to PrEP adherence and persistence. This multi-site randomized controlled trial (RCT) is among the first to test a behavioral intervention for achieving increases in PrEP adherence among stimulant-using people. The PARTI Study will enroll up to 300 people assigned male at birth on PrEP in Florida and California who report stimulant use (methamphetamine, cocaine or crack) to test whether delivering a positive affect intervention during smartphone-based contingency management for directly observed PrEP doses achieves greater reductions in HIV acquisition risk over 12 months. Smartphone-based contingency management is a potentially scalable intervention that will be augmented by a brief, evidence-based positive affect intervention. Findings from this RCT can help the targeted distribution of public health funding to reduce HIV incidence in this marginalized, underserved population of stimulant-using people.



Couples Continued

DuoPACT: A Couples-Based Approach to Improving Engagement in HIV Care

Investigators: Mallory Johnson (PI); Monica Gandhi, Tor Neilands, Kimberly Koester, Kristi Gamarel

Social support, particularly in the context of primary romantic relationships, has consistently been documented as a predictor of health behaviors, including adherence to care for HIV and other conditions. As such, couples-based interventions have the potential to create a lasting effect on engagement in HIV care, uptake and adherence to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention, and other health behaviors among sexual and gender minority primary relationships. DuoPACT is a randomized controlled trial comparing virologic outcomes of HIV sero discordant and sero concordant positive, sexual and gender minority couples randomized to a couple-level intervention or to an individual intervention. Study accrual and follow up are complete. Data analysis is in progress.

DuoPACT Stigma Paper. A Mixed-Methods Study of Relationship Stigma and Well-Being Among Sexual and Gender Minority Couples.

Investigators: Kristi Gamarel, Willi Farrales, Luz Venegas, Samathan Dilworth, Lara Coffin, Tor Neilands, Mallory Johnson, Kimberly Koester

To support analysis of DuoPACT's "relationship stigma" data, defined as the anticipated feelings of violence, discrimination, or rejection from family, friends, and others as a result of one's romantic relationship due to heteronormative and cis-normative models of relationships that pervade societies, qualitative interviews were completed with a subset of study participants. The interviews helped us to better understand the nuanced domains of relationship stigma and whether and how these different forms of stigma manifest in and impact participants' relationships.

[Read more here.](#)



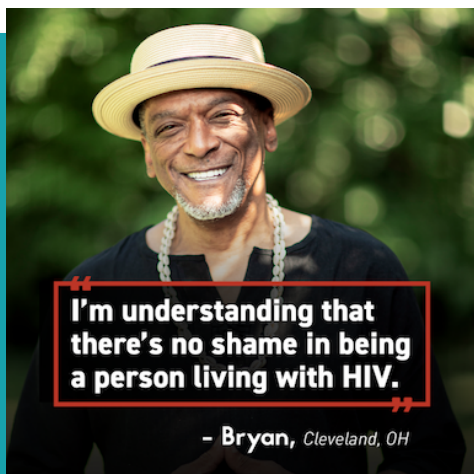
Couples Continued

Couples-Focused Intervention to Improve Engagement in HIV Care: Protocol for a Randomized Controlled Trial

Investigators: Alyssa Tabrisky, Laura Coffin, David Olem, Tor Neilands, Mallory Johnson.

To support analysis of DuoPACT's "relationship stigma" data, defined as the anticipated feelings of violence, discrimination, or rejection from family, friends, and others as a result of one's romantic relationship due to heteronormative and cis-normative models of relationships that pervade societies, qualitative interviews were completed with a subset of study participants. The interviews will help us to better understand the nuanced domains of relationship stigma and whether and how these different forms of stigma manifest in and impact participants' relationships.

[Couples-focused intervention to improve engagement in HIV care: protocol for a randomized controlled trial](#)



PrEP

Texas PrEP Intervention Study

Investigators: Susan Kegeles & Greg Rebchook (PIs), Robert Williams, Scott Tebbetts, Andres Maiorana

Texas has high rates of HIV infection despite the availability of PrEP. This study involved collaboration with two CBOs and an organization running two PrEP clinics to increase PrEP uptake, adherence, and persistence among young Black and Latino men who have sex with men (YBLMSM). The three organizations used Core Elements of the Mpowerment Project (MP), an evidence based, community-level intervention to facilitate the empowerment of young MSM and reduce HIV risk. This project assessed the implementation strategies and outcomes of PrEP-enhanced activities. Analysis is ongoing. However, instituting a series of Plan-Do-Study-Act worksheets to their implementation process seemed to be an acceptable approach. Though sites don't like extra paperwork, the idea of small, cyclical tests of change is a feasible implementation strategy. While very challenging, the last 2+ years have also been a time of considerable institutional innovation, flexibility, and dynamic growth whereby opportunities existed for the three organizations to learn from and support each other. Finally, expecting the unexpected became the norm due to COVID surges and climate events.

PrEP

Continued

CRRUSH-Sacramento: Connecting Resources for Rural and Urban Sexual Health in Sacramento County

Investigators: Kimberly Koester (PI), Orlando Harris, Chadwick Campbell, Shana Hughes, Janet Myers

The CRRUSH-Sacramento project is a collaboration between community members, service providers and researchers focused on adapting an evidence-based sexual health services intervention designed to increase PrEP uptake to fit the local HIV epidemic in Sacramento County, California one the hotspot counties identified in the United State's Ending the HIV Epidemic Initiative.

During this two-year study we will identify how to best adapt the CRUSH project to better meet the needs of young gay and bisexual racial and ethnic minority men in Sacramento County. To do so, we are using a novel strategy called a discrete choice experiment – a survey method most commonly used in the marketing industry. A discrete choice experiment or DCE is designed to examine how people prioritize and make trade-offs across a set of hypothetical scenarios in this case of the design of a sexual health clinic. Our DCE we will allow us to identify the elements of a sexual health service program that are the most important to young gay and bisexual men e.g., location, cost, type of appointments, provider demographics. This will allow us to strategically develop a sexual health clinic that matches the preferences of the community.

In collaboration with our community partners, we plan to implement the most preferred characteristics of a sexual health delivery model

and evaluate the extent to which the model optimizes the uptake of PrEP and routine STI screening and treatment among young gay and bisexual men in Sacramento County.

International

Multilevel HIV Prevention Intervention with MSM in Peru

Investigators: Susan Kegeles, Andre Maiorana, Carlos Caceres (Cayetano Heredia University, Perú)

This project seeks to implement and test a multi-level HIV prevention intervention (Proyecto Orgullo or Project Pride) for MSM and transgender women focusing on the full HIV Continuum of Prevention and Care. It focuses on community mobilization and empowerment around sexual risk reduction, HIV testing, helping gay men and transgender women living with HIV to engage in care, and working with the health system to increase focus on prevention with people living with HIV. This includes treatment as prevention and sensitization of the staff to work with gay men and transgender women. This “combination intervention” addresses individual, interpersonal, social and structural level issues.

International Continued

The ISHKonnect Study: Internet Based HIV Prevention for MSM in India

Investigators: Johnny Wilkerson (PI, UT Health Sciences Center Houston), Maria Ekstrand (CoPI), Simon Rosser (Co-PI, University of MN), Ashok Row Kavi (Co-I, Humsafar Trust, India), Shruta Rawat (Humsafar Trust, India), Pallav Patankar (Humsafar Trust, India), and Vivek Anand (CEO, Humsafar Trust, India)

The ISHKonnect study was the first study to examine sexual risk behaviors among MSM in Maharashtra, India, who were meeting male sex partners online. Following formative research, an online, cross-sectional survey was conducted among 449 MSM to determine the demographic characteristics, identities, attitudes, and sexual and substance use behaviors of this population and to develop recommendations for a future internet-based HIV-prevention intervention. Several articles have been published, including...

Information, Motivation, and Self-Efficacy Among Men Who Have Sex with Men and Transgender Women in the State of Maharashtra, India

Investigators: Wilkerson JM, Rhoton JM, Li D, Rawat SA, Patankar P, Rosser BRS, Ekstrand M

This publication concluded that condom-related knowledge is not associated with their use, which suggests that future condom campaigns need to go beyond knowledge to increase motivation. While access to ART in India has improved greatly in the past few years, PrEP is not yet easily available, which makes a continued inclusion of condom use an essential part of future HIV prevention campaigns.

Substance Use, Mental Health, HIV Testing, and Sexual Risk Behavior Among Men Who Have Sex with Men in the State of Maharashtra, India

Investigators: Wilkerson JM, Di Paola A, Rawat S, Patankar P, Rosser BRS, Ekstrand ML.

This publication reported high rates of depression (58%) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) (56%). Participants engaging in hazardous drinking (23%) or illicit substance use (12%) were more likely to have had multiple sexual partners and experience IPV. Those reporting illicit substance use were also more likely to engage in condomless anal sex. Based on these findings, it would likely be helpful for public health interventions to integrate HIV, substance use, and mental health services.



Town Hall Videos. [Subscribe to our YouTube channel.](#)

TOWN HALL VIDEO. Syndemic Approach to Prevention and Response: How the National Mpox Response Activated Close Friends and New Partners. Demetre Daskalakis, MD, MPH, Deputy Coordinator for the White House National Mpox Response.

The graphic is a rectangular poster with a teal background. On the left, there is a blue square containing a circular portrait of Demetre Daskalakis, a man with a beard and bald head, wearing a suit and tie. To the right of the portrait, the text 'SYNDEMIC APPROACH TO PREVENTION AND RESPONSE' is written in bold, black, uppercase letters. Below this, in smaller black text, is 'How the national mpox response activated close friends and new partners'. At the bottom left of the blue square, the text 'Demetre Daskalakis MD MPH Deputy Coordinator for the White House National MPOX Response' is written. At the bottom right, the UCSF logo is displayed next to the text 'Prevention Science Department of Medicine'.

SYNDEMIC APPROACH TO PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

How the national mpox response activated close friends and new partners

Demetre Daskalakis MD MPH
Deputy Coordinator for the White House National MPOX Response

UCSF Prevention Science
Department of Medicine

TOWN HALL VIDEO. Join national experts to learn current and emerging strategies in the PrEP funding landscape, including PrEP4All, 340B drug pricing, Ready Set PrEP, PrEP Assistance Programs, and more.

The graphic is a rectangular poster with a teal background. On the left, there is a blue square containing four circular portraits of national experts: Jeremiah Johnson, Jim Pickett, Kenyon Farrow, and Tim Horn. To the right of the portraits, the text 'A NATIONAL VISION FOR PREP' is written in bold, black, uppercase letters. Below this, in smaller black text, is 'Financing, Equity, Advocacy'. At the bottom left of the blue square, the names and roles of the four experts are listed: Jeremiah Johnson - PrEP4All, Jim Pickett - AVAC, Kenyon Farrow - PrEP User, Writer/Activist, and Tim Horn - NASTAD. At the bottom right, the UCSF logo is displayed next to the text 'Prevention Science Department of Medicine'.

A NATIONAL VISION FOR PREP

Financing, Equity, Advocacy

Jeremiah Johnson - PrEP4All
Jim Pickett - AVAC
Kenyon Farrow - PrEP User, Writer/Activist
Tim Horn - NASTAD

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Department of Medicine

Additional Resources

[Resources and Guidance Related to HIV and COVID-19](#)

What are Black men's HIV prevention needs? (2020)

<https://prevention.ucsf.edu/research-project/black-men-2>

What are transgender men's HIV prevention needs? (2015)

<https://prevention.ucsf.edu/research-project/transgender-men>

List of available fact sheets in English and some in Spanish

<https://prevention.ucsf.edu/resources/factsheets-english-and-spanish>

FREE. [Order a HIV Self-Test Kit in 3-minutes.](#) (United States).

UCSF Anti-Racism Initiative

<https://diversity.ucsf.edu/antiracism-initiative>



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