

# RAP\* Time



## RURAL CENTER *for* AIDS/STD PREVENTION

A JOINT PROJECT OF  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY, PURDUE UNIVERSITY,  
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\*Rural AIDS/STD prevention. rap (rap) v. Slang. To talk freely and openly. Vol. 4, No. 12, December 1, 2000

## Rural women reporting more sexual risk behaviors more likely to also report STD

Women having sex with men are at risk for acquiring HIV/STD. Women even with one male sex partner may be at risk because their partners may have other partners. Many of these women do not know that their partners also had other partners. Studies that examine only conventional risk behaviors (i.e. unprotected vaginal intercourse and injecting drug use) may underestimate risk level. This descriptive pilot study determined the prevalence of understudied risk behaviors for HIV/STD infection among a sample of rural women.

### Methodology

The subjects were 328 females, 18-39 years old, who reported that they had sex (vaginal, anal, or oral) with a male last year. Subjects were randomly selected and telephone interviewed from February to July of 1999 from four predominately rural South Carolina counties (Chesterfield, Florence, Lancaster and Marion). The interviews assessed number of male sex partners in the past 12 months and the frequency of six behaviors during a typical month in the past 12 months: anal sex

without condom use, oral sex without condom use, sexual intercourse during menses without condom use, sexual intercourse with poor lubrication without condom use, dry sex (deliberately drying the vaginal before intercourse) without condom use, and douching. Subjects were also asked if they were diagnosed with an sexually transmitted disease in the past 12 months.

### Outcomes of the Study

The mean age of the sample was 31.7 years. Nine women reported an STD diagnosis in the past 12 months.

Major findings include:

- About 7% reported more than one sex partner in the past year.
- During a typical four week period in the past 12 months, 4.2% reported having anal sex, 40.8% reported having oral sex, 20.3% reported having sexual intercourse during during menses, 36.3% reported having sexual intercourse with poor lubrication, and 4.8% reported having dry sex, all without a condom. In addition, 44.1% reported douching during a typical four week period in the past year.

- About 45% and 20% reported two or more and three or more risk behaviors, respectively, during a typical four week period in the past 12 months.
- Women reporting more risk behaviors were more likely to report an STD infection.

### Implications for Prevention

This study found that many of the women surveyed were at risk for acquiring HIV/STD from a male partner because they engaged in risky behaviors without condom use. Understudied risk behaviors may be important to include in research of womens' risk behavior in order to obtain a more accurate estimate of their HIV/STD risk. Educational efforts for rural women should include information about the value of condoms for HIV/STD protection during varied types of risk behavior.

SOURCE: Yarber, W. L., et al. (2000). Understudied HIV/STD risk behaviors among a sample of rural South Carolina women: A descriptive pilot study. *The Health Education Monograph Series*, 18(1), 1-5.

### HIV-infected gay rural men have more emotional distress

Most research on the quality of life in rural areas has combined heterosexual and gay participants. This study examined psychological distress and perceptions of loneliness among 125 HIV-infected gay and bisexual men living in rural communities in eight states.

Results showed that HIV-infected gay and bisexual men in rural states demonstrated significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to a reference group. Many reported increased perceptions of loneliness, with bisexual men reporting more loneliness. Also, participants with higher levels of depression were significantly more likely to be white, report increased perceptions of loneliness, and live in smaller areas.

Innovative mental health services are increasingly needed for the growing population of HIV-infected gay and bisexual men who live in rural areas.

SOURCE: Heckman, T. G., & Miller, J. G. (2000). Psychosocial distress among gay and bisexual men living with HIV in small U.S. towns and rural areas. *The Health Education Monograph Series*, 18(1), 39-44.

### Women who have anal sex also have other risky sexual behaviors

Per-contact probability of HIV transmission has been estimated to be 10 times higher for penile-anal than penile-vaginal sex. This study assessed the prevalence and the socio/behavioral correlates of anal sex in a cohort of HIV-seronegative women at high risk for HIV exposure.

Of 1268 sexually active women, 432 (32%) reported anal sex in the previous 6 months. Compared with women who did not report anal sex, those who did had more unprotected vaginal sex and a higher proportion of unprotected sexual (vaginal plus anal) episodes. Anal sex was reported by higher proportion of women who did not always use condoms, who used crack in the past year, who were younger, who has less education, who had been diagnosed with an STD in the past year, who had a primary male sex partner, and who had a male sex partner with a history of injecting drug use.

Prevention strategies for anal as well as vaginal sex are needed.

SOURCE: Gross, M., et al. (2000) Anal sex among HIV-seronegative women at high risk of HIV exposure. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*, 24, 393-398.

### Over 36 million adults and children living with HIV/AIDS worldwide

WHO estimates 36.1 million adults and children are living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. About 5.3 million people, including 600,000 children under age 15, acquired HIV this year. Sub-Saharan Africa has been affected the most with 3.8 million newly infected for a total of 25.3 million living with HIV/AIDS.

SOURCE: World Health Organization. (2000). Global AIDS surveillance -- Part I. *Weekly Epidemiological Record*, 75, 379-383.

### AIDS impacts Asians and Pacific Islanders

Through end of 1998, 4,928 AIDS cases were reported in adults and 46 cases in children among Asian and Pacific Islanders. Eighty-nine percent were among men (79% infected from sex with men). Of women, 47% were infected by heterosexual contact.

SOURCE: Wortley, P. M., et al. (2000). AIDS among Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 18, 208-214.



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#### RAP Time

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