

Assessing the HIV Prevention Needs of Diverse Communities of Women

Anita Keeping
Anonymous HIV Clinic Coordinator
Planned Parenthood Metro Clinic
Halifax, Nova Scotia

What Will We Be Doing Today?

- Reviewing Planned Parenthood Metro Clinic's research process
- Examining the results of the research
- Comparing the results to what is already known about women and HIV
- Discussing how this information can be used in your own agencies

Program Overview

- Program in operation at Planned Parenthood Metro Clinic since 1994
- Only anonymous HIV testing program in Nova Scotia
- Testing done at clinic and at four outreach sites to improve accessibility for IDU, MSM, GLBT youth, First Nations peoples
- Approximately 500 clients per year

Rationale for Project

- Very few women from sex trade community, African Nova Scotian/Black community, or socioeconomically disadvantaged areas getting tested
- Health Canada reports HIV rates on rise for women who have sex with men
- NS Framework for Action on HIV/AIDS recommends more done with ANS
- Province deliberating expansion of program

Objectives of the Project

- To identify the priority HIV prevention education needs of marginalized women in Halifax
- To identify the HIV prevention services needed for marginalized women in Halifax
- To examine the impact of social determinants of health on these women's experience of HIV and HIV prevention
- To communicate the results of this research with key stakeholders
- To share the results of this research with the communities involved

Research Process

- Assess need for project
- Are we the organization best equipped for this project?
- Making connections with partner organizations
- Seeking involvement of target populations in project
- Recruitment of participants for focus groups

Funding

- Proposal submitted to Health Canada for ACAP funding
- Project met funding approaches of both prevention initiatives and strengthening community-based organizations

Advantages of Focus Groups

- High response rate
- Efficient
- Economical
- Can stimulate productivity of others

Disadvantages of Focus Groups

- May intimidate and suppress individual differences
- Fosters conformity
- Group pressure may influence responses

Results – Sex Trade Workers

- Addictions
- Issues with men
- Legal ramifications
- Condom use
- Stigma
- Support
- Emotional aspects
- Safety

Addictions

"Yeah, the dope is there. I want my dope right now, you know. Worry about HIV, Hepatitis ten years when the time... you know, they say it stays in your system 13 years, you know, I mean we're talking immediate. And when you're a person that went to work on the street because of an addiction, like if they went out there without having that first time to learn about safer sex practices, you know, and things like that, you're not going to think about that stuff."

Issues With Men

P: ..a lot of times the women that work will use condoms with their clients all the time but then..

P: Forget about it.

P: Forget about it when you get a lover. Because you know, I mean it's kind of like.. the condoms will make you think more of work whereas you want to have a personal sex life too and it's hard, you know, there's a whole lot of other issues there too. You know, but unless one of those factors are present, why bother?

P: Yeah, that's what I would think too. Why bother?

Issues With Men

P: You know, now I'm mad because I have to stand out here all these hours and like.. we used to laugh and say the better you look the longer you stand, you know, so make yourself all dirty and scruffy and you'll get a date. That's the way it is now.

(Laughter)

I: And is that like sort of maybe that desperation thing?

P: That's what the clients want.

P: It's the look. It's the look.

Legal Ramifications

"I've heard other people say okay, what if I get tested and I'm positive? Does my own moral responsibility fall in the fact that I should stop working because I am positive which makes me a higher risk not only to clients but to whoever else that they associate with or.. you know. So.. and also because of the legal stands of it, like are the cops going to mess with me more, oh there's that one with, you know, with AIDS. So they're going to mess with them more and they've seen that from past experiences with some of the women who are already positive."

Condom Use

"Yeah, even if it's not the fear of getting your behind whupped, it's just all different things for a lot of different people so.. it's a competition, so like if.. like if you were to say, no I'm not going to have sex with you unless you wear a condom, but then the woman next to you says, well I'll do it regardless."

Stigma

P: Like I said, there was some girls that just.. like they're hiding the fact that they're working so they don't want anybody to know and they don't want to accept condoms and stuff.

P: Because they're ashamed. They're ashamed of themselves. By putting themselves out there, they're ashamed.

P: Yeah. But they're putting themselves at risk.

Support

P: That's like me out there every night, I'm out there every night, right, and there's girls there every night, Kimmie you got any condoms? I give them to them all the time, no matter if it's two or three or if I have to give them a couple..

P: Oh, never I'd never deny.

Emotional Aspects

“That’s what I’m out there for. I got out there because I’m not with nobody but when I go there I just want to feel like.... I know they’re lying when they say they love me and stuff, but I just feel the emotion, and I feel good after.”

Safety

“I worked in a lot of bigger cities too and I found that a lot of girls were, you know, worrying about their safety less because they were more worried about the ass whupping they were going to take if they didn't have so much money to come home with.”

Results – Low Income Single Mothers

- Issues with men
- Condom use
- Misconceptions

Issues With Men

P: What's your man going to be doing when you ain't looking? Everybody goes, my man ain't doing nothing. But you really don't know about it.

P: But I think a lot of it has to be.. the women got to change a lot of attitudes towards that as well. It's..

P: Trust your man.

P: If you feel that you man is out there diddling somebody else...

P: Use a condom.

P: Get rid of him.

Condom Use

I: Now what do you think might be preventing women especially from protecting themselves against HIV?

P: Because they're (men) good talkers.

P: All wrapped up into the man, oh well he don't want to... he doesn't want to use it because it don't feel good. Too bad for you.

Misconceptions

..and you know women are quite shocked, if they're in a heterosexual relationship and they were surprised to find like, that they were (infected).

P: And so she ends up with something and it's like, oh my God, how did that happen?

P: That's how the talk of toilet seats and all this comes into play. Like, you know what I shook hands with a possible.. Because they were home, they didn't do anything and somehow they got something.

I: So they don't want to believe that it's the men in their lives that could have done...

P: Yeah.

I: So it's easier to believe the more extreme things?

P: Yeah.

Misconceptions

P: Have you been tested for AIDS? Because I'm going to be the first one to ask if your dickey ain't clean, you might as well keep on walking.

P: But I mean even as a woman, women get intuitions about certain things. You can feel when something don't feel right. If somebody is getting hesitant in their voice about what they're saying to you about having sex then obviously I'm not going to be in the bed with them.

P: And find out their mannerisms like how often they take a shower, how often do they clean themselves, like just general hygiene. Because that will tell you a lot about a person.

I: Well, let's say if you had a guy and he said to you in a real sweet like oh, yes, I was tested you know less than a month ago and he's really clean, he's really nice, okay would you take his word for it?

P: No. (agreement)

Results – African Nova Scotian Women

- Church involvement
- Issues with men
- Condom use
- Stigma
- Gossip
- Need for relevant information
- Issues with race

Church Involvement

P: Well the first thing.. they see it as sin and you got to.. you know, you have to go into the theological theories and tell them... I mean you would have to get into a whole Biblical thing to say listen..

P: How would Jesus deal with this? Jesus is not going to block it off, you know, he's going to find a way to reach people, so you just have to open them up because our churches are very closed..

Issues With Men

“And interjected into that relationship is almost an issue of mistrust you know, because we can’t deny the fact that our men have many interests too, you know, and if you, you know, give them any kind of little inkling that you.. suspect that they’re cheating or whatever, that raises a whole bunch of issues. And for many women, they’d rather not go there. Even if they want to be tested to even know, you know, those are issues that are no joke.”

Condom Use

I: Why is it? How come we don't talk to our partners about condom use?

P: Because first of all they wouldn't even be thinking about the Downlow Brothers being in my house.

P: That's true.

Stigma

“..it’s not a discussion that people talk about around their kitchen table or talk to the children about because the majority (of people with HIV) are homosexuals. And that is like a forbidden word in the black community, not every family, but I’m just saying those who are really connected to the church... I’m not saying anything negative about the church but those who are connected with the church still go back to Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. So that’s why they don’t discuss these kind of things or be open about HIV because there’s no need to be.”

Gossip

P: But you know very well word flies.. word flies fast in this community. Oh there's a mobile unit coming in here and test people for AIDS.

P: and then they'd be sitting there, oh, did you know we saw so and so, and so and so in there.

P: And watching people who's going there.

Need for Relevant Information

P: As a matter of fact, now to this.. as I speak we have nothing in Canada except for I think one organization in Toronto that's doing HIV and AIDS education with Black people in Canada.. all of Canada.

P: And we have nothing in the Atlantic provinces except for the time when we had the Black Outreach Project and that was covering all the Atlantic provinces, you know what I mean. So we have nothing, we really don't.

Issues With Race

P: Well, they have stats though because they have... they have stats, you know what I mean. I just think it's a lack of concern. And I hate to say it, I don't want to call it the race card, but it is.

P: It's a form of genocide.

P: It's a lack of concern. I mean.. a form of genocide, right, if this is happening over here with those negros over there, why are we putting our tax Canadian dollars in it, you know. It sounds sad but that's what it usually is.