

CHOICES

Best Evidence – Risk Reduction

INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION

Target Population

- Low-income heterosexually active women

Goals of Intervention

- Prevent new sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Increase use of safer sex strategies such as abstinence, monogamy, and/or condom use

Brief Description

CHOICES is a small-group (5–10 women), skills training intervention designed to reduce STD infections and risky sex behaviors of women at risk for STDs, including HIV. The intervention focuses on skills that emphasize initial behavior change as well as the maintenance of behavior change over time. Motivational and decision-making exercises help women choose safer sex strategies best suited to their circumstances; and skill building exercises, using role plays, teach how to implement these successfully. Skills include using condoms correctly, negotiating safe sex with their partners, and creating lifestyle balance. The intervention also encourages women to evaluate their relationship choices, and explore how those choices affect their health and well-being.

Theoretical Basis

- Relapse Prevention Model

Intervention Duration

- 16 weekly 2-hour group sessions

Intervention Setting

- Community-based locations

Deliverer

- Teams of female-male masters- and doctoral-level psychotherapists of differing ethnicities

Delivery Methods

- Exercises
- Goal setting
- Group discussions
- Lectures
- Printed materials

INTERVENTION PACKAGE INFORMATION

An intervention package is not available at this time. Please contact **Blair Beadnell**, 6103 11th Avenue NW, Seattle, WA 98107.

Email: blair.beadnell@primeforlife.org for details on intervention materials.

EVALUATION STUDY AND RESULTS

The original evaluation study was conducted in Seattle-King County, Washington between 1994 and 1996.

Key Intervention Effect

- Reduced new STDs

Study Sample

The study sample of 287 women at high risk for acquiring HIV and other STDs is characterized by the following:

- 54% white, 29% black or African American, 5% American Indian, 5% multi-racial, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% Hispanic/Latino, 1% other
- 100% female
- Mean age of 30 years

Recruitment Settings

Clinics, service organizations, and media outlets

Eligibility Criteria

Women were considered eligible for the evaluation if they spoke English, were at least 18 years of age, and had sex with high-risk men during the previous 4 months.

Assignment Method

Women were randomly assigned to either the skills training intervention (n = 145) or to a health education comparison intervention (n = 142).

Comparison Group

The health education comparison intervention consisted of 16 weekly 2-hour group sessions. Topics included safer sex education, the impact of HIV on women, pregnancy decision-making, violence against women, coping and parenting, and communication with partners about safer sex. Community health educators delivered these topics through formal lectures and group discussions. Decision-making and skills building, active components in the experimental intervention, were avoided.

Relevant Outcomes Measured and Follow-up Time

- Sexual risk behaviors during the prior 4 months were assessed before the intervention and at 4- and 12-month post-intervention follow-ups and were combined using a risk index.

- STD diagnoses were confirmed before the intervention and incidence STDs were measured at the 12-month follow-up.

Participant Retention

- CHOICES Intervention
 - 87% retained at 4 months
 - 84% retained at 12 months
- Comparison
 - 85% retained at 4 months
 - 82% retained at 12 months

Significant Findings

- Over 12-months of follow-up, women in the skills training intervention group were significantly less likely to acquire a new STD than women in the comparison group ($p = 0.05$).

Considerations

- Women in both intervention groups significantly reduced risky sex behaviors from baseline levels.

REFERENCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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